



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Issue 145

# *Something's Wrong with This Gospel!*

by – Bob Evely

Someone passed along to me a copy of “*Today's Christian*” magazine that contained an interesting question-and-answer article entitled, “*I Waited Too Long.*” The writer expressed deep regret in taking too much time preparing to share the gospel with a friend, and before he was able to do so the friend died. He asked for help in finding peace.

The response comforted the writer by saying that he may one day be “surprised” to find his friend in heaven, and that he should not blame himself for missing his chance to witness. There “may have been” other believers that God used to share the gospel with this friend in his final days.

“You may be surprised to see your friend in heaven!” “God may have used other believers to share the gospel with your friend.” This is the only assurance that is offered by most in the church today in cases where a friend or loved one has died without responding correctly to the gospel.

But what if others also do not share the gospel? What if others are like this friend who waited, and prepared, and never got around to sharing with this friend?

This interchange should cause anyone to stop and observe, “Something is wrong with this gospel!”

Salvation of the lost seems to rest a great deal upon we who are Christians. If we don't witness, others end up in hell forever. We were remiss, but

we end up in heaven. Because of our neglect, others end up in hell.

God seems to place an awful lot of responsibility on our shoulders! His “plan of salvation” seems to be dependent on how well we do what we're supposed to do. But look at the sorry history of mankind as recorded in the Bible! Would God really base the eternal destiny of others upon our performance?

Something is wrong with this gospel!

Perhaps, though, God knows of our weaknesses, and takes control of things Himself. Perhaps He draws the lost to Himself, so they can accept the gospel even if all believers fail to act. Or perhaps God causes some believers to take action so that others will hear and accept the gospel!

But if God is in control, why can't He lead ALL mankind to salvation? Why can't God know who to send, and what needs to be said or done so that every lost soul hears, understands and acknowledges Him as Lord?

Guess what! God **is** in control, and this is exactly what He is in the process of doing. You can't

(see *GOSPEL*, page 1483)

Something's Wrong with This Gospel! ..... 1481  
The Kingdoms of This World - Select  
Readings on Human Government (Part 2) . 1484

# Precious Ones, Beloved of the Father:

BOB EVELY

In this issue of the *BSN* we are running the first of a series of articles from Bob Evely. Bob was an ordained minister, pastoring in the *United Methodist* and *Free Methodist* denominations. In 2002 he resigned from the pastorate because of where his study of God's Word had led him.

I trust that you will enjoy *Something's Wrong with this Gospel!* as well as the future installments that we plan to carry. Brother Evely is also the author of the book, *At the End of the Ages: The Abolition of Hell*, an overview of the Biblical and historical evidence in support of the fact that God will ultimately save *all*, and not just some. The cost is \$16.<sup>90</sup> (including s&h). It can be ordered (along with other titles about the *salvation of all*) at our website, or by calling or writing (information provided below).

## ELECTION 2008

Presidential election years always bring about a lure for the believer to become active in the political process.

Early in my Christian life I was a political activist. I served as a political party youth chairman, coordinating party functions and even working the polls.

A little over 15 years ago I began to see my role *very* differently in relationship to the power-play scheme perpetuated by the influence of the human religious-political world-system. The course of this world is currently under the dominion of the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), he giving governmental power to "whomsoever he will" (Luke 4:5-6).

As believers we are not of this world; we are strangers and foreigners here. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20);<sup>1</sup> our King is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Timothy 1:17; 6:15); and we are His ambassadors in a foreign land (II Corinthians 5:20). For this reason we never see our Lord Jesus Christ, the Israel's Twelve Apostles, or our own apostle, Paul, involved in the governmental-political arena.

(see **EDITORIAL**, next page)

1. The *King James Version* translators show us in their marginal notes that "conversation is in heaven" carries the meaning of being "citizens of heaven."

## **Bible Student's Notebook**

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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## PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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**GOSPEL** (continued from page 1481)

tell by looking at the state of affairs in the world today, or even the state of “The Church” ... but in His Word God assures us that He is in control ... that He is the Savior of all mankind (I Timothy 4:9-11) ... that just as in Adam all are dying, so also in Christ will all be made alive (I Corinthians 15:21-23) ... that Christ is reigning until all are subjected to God and God becomes “*All in all*” (I Corinthians 15:20-28).

Something is wrong with the gospel that is preached by most preachers and teachers today. Their gospel says that **IF** you correctly respond to the gospel in this lifetime, however long you may have, you will spend eternity in heaven. But **IF** you do not respond correctly to the gospel in this lifetime, you will spend eternity in hell, being tormented endlessly with no hope of escape. The word “gospel” means good news, but what is preached by most today sounds more like good news and bad news.

That’s because it is not what God’s Word says.

Since roughly the fifth century, the majority teaching within “the church” (called “orthodoxy”) has taught the doctrine of endless torment ... But this teaching stems from ... a failure to carefully study God’s Word to understand “how it all fits together.” One cannot simply read from any place in the Bible and proclaim, “Here God is speaking to me.” God has worked in different ways in different ages, using different individuals or groups of people.

But one thing is consistent throughout. God is continually working toward the goal of reconciling ALL to Himself!

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**EDITORIAL** (continued from previous page)

In this issue of the *BSN* we will continue our series of quotations (*The Kingdoms of This World*) from other believers related to the theme of *Human Government*. You will notice among them that our dear brother in Christ Bill Petri has authored a new work on this topic, ***Government, War, and the Christian***. The cost is \$19.<sup>90</sup> (including s&h). The same as with brother Evely’s book, it can be ordered (along with other titles on the theme of *human government*) at our website, or by calling or writing (information provided below).

Today the world hears “the church” proclaiming good news mixed with bad news. “You can get to heaven if you will believe before it is too late, but as for your deceased loved ones, take heart ... maybe you will be surprised to see them in heaven ... maybe God sent a Christian to them just in time so they could respond ... maybe ... maybe ... maybe ...” Good news, is it?

Something is wrong with this gospel!

But what God’s Word REALLY says, if one can escape the biased and incorrect teachings of “the church,” is that God is in the process of saving ALL mankind.

All will be made alive! Not all at the same time, but all in their time (see I Corinthians 15:22-23). God cannot become “All in all” (I Corinthians 15:28) until the last sheep is safely in the fold.

God is “*the Saviour of all men, pecially those that believe*” (I Timothy 4:10). Yes, He is the Savior of believers in a special way, for they believe and are saved in this present age through faith, and serve a specific function in the unfolding works of God. But God is the Savior **especially** of believers, not **exclusively** of believers. For one day **every** knee will bow, **all** will be subjected to Him, and He will be “**All in all**.”

This is God’s plan, as revealed to us in His Word. It is not contingent upon anything we do. God’s will cannot be thwarted by mankind. It is guaranteed. **And that is the gospel!**

*Grace Evangel Newsletter* (2005) ■

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Your fellow,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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# *The Kingdoms of this World*

## Select Readings on Human Governments

(Part 2)

*"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, 'All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8-9).*

*"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence'" (John 18:36).*

### **LOST DISTINCTIVE**

To a large degree, we've lost our distinct kingdom-of-God vision and abandoned our mission. We've allowed the world to define us, set our agenda, and define the terms of our engagement with it. We've accepted the limited and divisive kingdom-of-the-world options and therefore mirror the kingdom-of-the-world conflicts.

Gregory A. Boyd

*The Myth of a Christian Nation* (2005), page 64

### **TAKING BACK AMERICA FOR GOD**

We have become intoxicated with the Constantinian, nationalistic, violent mindset of imperialistic Christendom ... The evidence of this is all around but nowhere clearer than in the simple, oft-repeated slogan that we Christians are going to "take America back for God." The thinking is that America was founded as a Christian nation but has simply veered off track. If we can just get the power of Caesar again, however, we can take it back. If we can just get more Christians into office, pass more Christian laws, support more Christian policies, we can restore this nation to its "one nation under God" status ...

If we look at historic reality rather than pious

verbiage, it's obvious that America never really "belonged to God."... There was nothing distinctively Christ-like about the way America was "discovered," conquered, or governed in the early years. To the contrary, the way this nation was "discovered," conquered, and governed was a rather typical, barbaric, violent, kingdom-of-the-world affair ... The fact that it was largely done under the banner of Christ doesn't make it more Christian, any more than any other bloody conquest done in Jesus' name throughout history (such as the Crusades and the Inquisition) qualifies them as Christ-like.

Gregory A. Boyd

*The Myth of a Christian Nation* (2005)

Pages 90-91, 99

### **GOD IS NOT AN AMERICAN**

Not only is God not a member of a political party, He is also not an American. "God is no respecter of persons," and yet while we are bombing and killing Iraqi citizens, Christians have no problem promoting the slogan "God bless America" while hanging American flags from their houses and cars, and at the same time telling others that we must "pray for our troops." What about God blessing Iraq? Has God forgotten them? What about praying for the poor in this world? Is God

concerned that Iraqi men (women and children) are dying or is it only “our troops” that concern Him?

God loves Americans, but He also loves Iraqis, Palestinians, Russians and Chinese. I am aware that most Christians understand this; however, I’m not sure we are living this principle ...

We must stop this promotion of America. It is not America, but Jesus Christ we should be promoting. He is the source of our life and the focus of our vision (Hebrews 12:2a)!

Ken Eckerty  
*God is not a Republican*

### **GOD IS NOT A REPUBLICAN**

In the fall of 2000, I was a campaign worker for the George W. Bush campaign. At that particular time in my life, my heart was far from the Lord and I needed something to fill the void. I can remember making phone calls and telling people that Governor Bush was the answer to America’s problems. I told them that Bush would restore integrity back to the White House and would work hard to lower our taxes and restore confidence back to our military. Four years later, I realized that my so-called “noble” desire for lower taxes, less government, and a more powerful military was nothing more than my own selfish desire to pad my own pocket, keep the government out of my business, and help me feel safe each and every day. In other words, my goal was to satisfy my own flesh, and I trusted more in the provision of the government than my own God.

I, like many other Christians, had fallen for the lie that Christianity and Republicanism (or Conservatism if you like) were compatible – and even ideologically equal. However, nothing could be further from the truth. We have been deceived into thinking that God is going to somehow use the Republican party to bring in His Kingdom. Is it really God’s policy for the Christian to support the lowering of taxes so “Americans can keep their own money?” Does God really want Christians to pursue the idea that we should have lesser government in order to “give more power to the

people?” Is it God’s purpose for the Church to be in support of a stronger military and promote the spending of billions of dollars on weapons programs when there are people all over the world who are homeless and starving? Are these the things we should be concerning ourselves with? Are these Christian principles? Well, they certainly are the principles of the Republican Party, but I see nowhere in Scripture where God wants us to pursue these things. God wants us to pursue those things that are “*lovely, pure, and of good report.*” (Philippians 4:8). He wants us to be consumed with living the gospel of Christ, not the external reformation of a culture ...

I must add that God is not a Democrat either. He is neither a Libertarian, a Constitutionalist, nor a member of the Green Party ...

Ken Eckerty  
*God is Not a Republican*

### **“MY RIGHTS”**

A common phrase I hear from Christians in relation to politics is it is “my right” to have security, or it is “my right” to have low cost health care, or it is “my right” to have lower taxes, or it is “my right” to have religious freedom, etc.

It is not our right at all!

As Christians, we have no rights. The apostle Paul uses different words as it relates to the so-called “freedom” of the Christian. In I Corinthians 4:1 Paul uses the Greek word “*huperetes*” to describe our calling. This word was used to describe a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> level galley slave who had no rights. If you’ve ever seen the movie *Ben Hur* you will understand that a lower level rower was treated as worthless and had absolutely no rights whatsoever. In Ephesians 3:7, Paul uses the word “*diakonos*” which means a lowly table waiter. A waiter is at the beck and command of those whom he serves. In Romans 1:1, Paul calls himself a “*doulos*” of Jesus Christ. This was one who was in the total service of another. This same idea is spoken of in Exodus 21 when a servant had his ear pierced in order to forever bind himself to his master. As Christians, we are totally at the command of our

Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. The days of us having personal rights are gone forever ...

When so-called “religious rights” are taken away from us, we are shocked to think that this could happen in America. Fueled by such radio programs as “Focus on the Family,” we write our Congressman and Senators and cry that our rights have been violated. Dear Christian, we have no rights! Oh, you may say that we have rights as American citizens, but beloved, we must make a choice ... we cannot serve both God and America. Either we are strangers in this world or we are not. Either our citizenship is in heaven or it is here in America (Hebrews 11:13, 16; I Peter 2:11).

We are not Americans first, then Christians second. We are not even Christians first, and Americans second. We are Christians, period! The “red, white, and blue” is not our home. America is not our provider and we should not expect the government to grant us rights – that privilege belongs to God alone. If we are blessed, let us thank God. If we are in a period of tribulation, let us seek God and submit to the work He has brought our way. When disaster struck Job, he understood who was the source of all things. He responded by saying, “*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*” (Job 1:21).

Ken Eckerty  
*God is not a Republican*

### THE KINGDOM WITHIN

*“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20b-21).*

Those who spend their time trying to change their nation through external means simply do not understand what Jesus is saying in Luke 17. It is clear throughout the New Testament that real change can only come about through the changing of the heart. True and lasting change always starts from within and then spreads outward, not the other way around. Jesus condemned the Pharisees by calling them “*white-washed tombs full of dead*

*men’s bones*” (Matthew 23:25-27). Cleaning up the nation through external means (voting, legislation, etc.) is like taking a scrub brush to the outside of a coffee cup but leaving the inside filthy and to rot.

Nowhere in the New Testament is there any exhortation or commandment to change the government through external means ... Paul exhorts us not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life (II Timothy 2:4). Men concern themselves with laws and rights; however, this idea should be totally foreign to those who are pursuing the high calling of Christ ...

Romans 6:4 tells us that we are “*raised to walk in newness of life.*” Newness of life means walking in the power of the resurrection wrought through the work of the cross in our life. This work slays any desire to do things man’s way, and instead, seeks to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom WITHIN. It does not include protesting or boycotting. It does not include voting or political demonstrations. These are the methods of men, not God, and they are a cheap substitute for the true gospel.

Ken Eckerty  
*God is not a Republican*

### THE REDEEMER NATION

While listening to the news I heard a presidential candidate refer to the United States as “the hope of the world.”

Donald B. Kraybill addresses this mindset in his book, *Our Star-Spangled Faith*:

“Tucked away in our national mythology is the notion that America is a redeemer nation. We are led to believe that the American Messiah brings salvation to the rest of the world, *i.e.*, that the American way of life redeems the cultures of other countries, that God will use the American nation to magnify Himself among other nations.”<sup>1</sup>

An example of the “Redeemer Nation” mentality

1. Donald B. Kraybill, *Our Star-Spangled Faith* (1976), Herald Press, back cover.

can be seen in the following remarks made by the president of the National Council for the Encouragement of Patriotism, Inc.

“When I place my right hand over my heart as that glorious American flag passes by, I feel very near to God”<sup>2</sup>

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.  
Windber, PA

### **NATIONAL IDOLATRY**

America’s “God and Country” priests love places of honor at Presidential prayer breakfasts, football games, parades, and political conventions ...

America places pious phrases in public places (“In God We Trust”) ... [and] wraps the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ in the stars and stripes, leading her citizens into a kind of national idolatry.

But Jesus is not partial to the United States. He loves the whole world.

### **THE REVOLUTION OF JESUS CHRIST**

Though sympathizing with the revolutionaries’ analysis of what was wrong with society and in fact being mistaken for a revolutionary Himself by the political authorities of His day, nevertheless Jesus did not advocate a new political regime to be established by force through revolutionary action. He called for the love of our enemies, not their destruction; ... for readiness to suffer instead of using force; for forgiveness instead of hate and revenge. One might even say Jesus was more revolutionary than the revolutionaries, or revolutionary in a very different way. The revolution He had in mind was a radical change of heart on the part of mankind, involving conversion away from selfishness and toward the willing service of God and of people in general.

Clark H. Pinnock  
*Reason Enough* (1980)

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2. *Newsweek*, June 15, 1970, page 30.

### **THE SERIOUS DANGER OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NAME OF GOD**

Theocracy is the worst of all governments. If we must have a tyrant, a robber baron is far better than an inquisitor. The baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep ... [b]ut the inquisitor who mistakes his own cruelty and lust of power and fear for the voice of Heaven will torment us infinitely, because he torments us with the approval of his own conscience and his better impulses appear to him as temptations. And since Theocracy is the worst, the nearer any government approaches to Theocracy the worse it will be.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)  
*Of Other Worlds*, page 81

Of all tyrannies a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)  
*The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment, Res Judicatae* June 1953

### **DOES GENESIS 9:6 SUPPORT HUMAN GOVERNMENT?**

*“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Genesis 9:6).*

Many mistake this passage for a passage that supports human government. But does it? The key to understanding the verse is actually just taking the words for what they say. The verse does not command anyone to take a murderer’s life, but rather it is communicating the idea that a violent person will meet a violent end. Jesus will give validity to this interpretation in Matthew 26:52:

*“... All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”*

Why do violent people often meet a violent end? Violent people often meet a violent end because they have little regard for the image of God, and

this leads to violent lives. Violent choices more often than not lead to violent consequences ...

There is a lot of assumption made in Genesis nine to try to make the passage fit human government.

William Petri

*Government, War, and the Christian* (2008)

Page 19

### CHRIST VS. WAR

Christ says, "Love your enemies;"

War says, "Hate them."

Christ says, "Bless them that curse you;"

War says, "Curse them that curse you."

Christ says, "Do good to them;"

War says, "Do them harm."

Christ says, "Pray for them;"

War says, "Slay them."

Christ says, "I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;"

War says, "I am come to destroy men's lives."

Paul says, "Overcome evil with good;"

War says, "Overcome evil with evil."

Paul says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him;"

War says, "Starve him."

Paul says, "If he thirst, give him drink;"

War says, "Destroy his wells."

Paul says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood;"

War says, "We do wrestle against flesh and blood."

Daniel Vaniman (1835-1903)

*Christ and War*

Brethren Publishing House (1900)

### CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS

"For our conversation is in heaven ..."  
(Philippians 3:20).

Rather than following earthly authority in the form of human governments, which derive their authority from Satan [Luke 4:5-7], believers are called upon to follow God's authority. We are called to be ambassadors for our heavenly government to these present earthly governments ...

The word "conversation" in Philippians 3:20 is an interesting word. It is the Greek word "*politeuma*" and means "the commonwealth of citizens." It is interesting that in the English language we take our word *politic* from this Greek word. The political language used here, to be sure, is no coincidence ... The Body of Christ has its "conversation [citizenship] in heaven." As citizens of heaven, while on earth, we serve as Christ's ambassadors ...

Paul's use of the term "ambassador" to describe the role of believers was an excellent choice. We live under a foreign government – the human governments which are controlled by Satan. Just as earthly ambassadors do not take part in the governments they reside under, believers should not take part in earthly governments. Instead, recognizing that our citizenship lies in heaven, we should serve as representatives to those around us; we should serve as ambassadors for Christ.

William Petri

*Government, War, and the Christian* (2008)

Pages 11-13

### CALLED OUT OF EGYPT

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son"  
(Matthew 2:15).

God always calls His sons out of Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world system. It is a type of the religions, economic, social, and political course of this world, a multi-faceted conglomerate system.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

God's sons may be in the world, but not of the world. They are foreigners and strangers; citizens of another domain – having been translated "into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*Windber, PA*

