

Alumni Feature

West Virginia School of Preaching

Christ Preached Through Noah

Peter Ray Cole (1998)

In the final hours of our Lord's life, the self-admitted thief on the cross pleaded with Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." (Luke 23:41-42; NKJV). Knowing the man's heart (John 2:25), Jesus answered the thief, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Many have struggled to harmonize this passage in Luke with the difficult passage found in 1 Peter 3:18-22. The confusion begins in

verse 18, where Peter speaks of the death of Christ and then in verse 19 states, "He went and preached to the spirits in prison." The context of the passage is perhaps often overshadowed by the mind's imagination running wild with visions of Christ literally standing on the shore of Hades and preaching to the tortured "spirits in prison, who were formerly disobedient" (1 Pet. 3:19-20). Before we allow this artificial image to construct belief in false doctrines, we must slow down and digest this passage within the context of other Scripture.

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that anyone receives a "second chance" after their physical life is finished. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." Notice that 1 Peter 3:18 also records that Christ "suffered once for sins," informing us that His suffering was necessary only on one occasion—the cross.

First Peter 3:18-19 shows us that the Holy Spirit restored life to Christ's glorified body and was also the Agent by whom Christ preached to the "spirits in prison." This was accomplished through the preacher of righteousness, Noah (2 Pet. 2:5). These souls were in prison (Hades/torment) when Peter wrote this difficult passage; however, they were living a life of unrighteousness when Noah preached a message of repentance and righteousness to them (Gen. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:25). They ignored this message and were held accountable for their decision. Christ, through the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 3:19-20), used Noah to preach a message of salvation through repentance and the ark.

Jesus preached "through the Spirit" in Noah's preaching. This is parallel to what Peter recorded earlier in 1 Peter 1:10-11, concerning the prophets preaching in the "Spirit of Christ," prophesying about the "grace that was to come." Paul also recorded that Christ would preach to the Gentiles through the Apostles. Ephesians 2:17 says, "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near." Christ preached this message of peace Himself and enlisted the Apostles to preach the message to those who arrived after His death. If Christ preached through the Prophets, Apostles and even Gospel preachers today, certainly He could have preached through Noah, a preacher of righteousness.

According to the inspired Word of God, our Lord never crossed the gulf that separates the place of torment and paradise in the Hadean world. When He commended his soul into His Father's hands and breathed His last, an unimaginable Paradise of rest awaited him. Our assurance as Christians is firmly planted in the fact that after three days, Christ was resurrected and then later ascended into Heaven where He prepares a place for us (John 14:1-3). Ω



From the Director's Pen

August 2010 Is Off To A Good Start

Denver E. Cooper

West Virginia School of Preaching has started off well. Six new students enrolled this year with three who returned as second year students. We also have three part time students. Some have called in late who want to get started as soon as it can be worked out for them and for us.

As you know tuition for the entire two years is free. We do expect the students to raise the money for their food and other personal needs. They do this by calling upon congregations and individuals to help them. There are five single students who receive the least amount of support. There are four married students, three of whom have two or more children.

The elders of the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ oversee the work of the school. In so doing they supply a large portion of the income for the salaried people including the one who has been chosen as the Associate Director. They have committed \$12,000 a year to his support.

As you can see, a great deal of support money must come because students have raised it by the generosity of those who want to help us train preachers. There are many congregations and individuals who are helping us and who have been helping us since we began training men. We are very grateful for all of the prayers and financial support.

There is a need for others to join the number of those who are financial supporters to help us reach the goal that has been set by the elders and faculty of the school. Sixty-four full time preachers have been graduated, most of who are full time workers in God's Kingdom. We hope there will be many more who will decide to become preachers.

This year we have started a Preacher Training class. It is for 14 - 18 year old young men. There was a good turn out this year. The same is being planned for 2011. You may be able to help us in this matter by encouraging young men to come to the classes. They run from 9 A.M. till 7:30 P.M. Please pray that while the fields are white many may be persuaded to attend with the idea of eventually enrolling in the school of preaching.

Brother Jefferson Sole, a graduate of WVSOP, and most recently from Freed-Hardeman University, with his wife, is now living in Moundsville. He will be spending most of his time recruiting students from West Virginia and surrounding states. He wants to visit as many churches as possible and will, by invitation, schedule a visit with your congregation. We hope you will help him plan to meet you, explain the workings of the school and invite you to help in supporting the students.

Preaching is the most rewarding work one can do. It is so encouraging to be somewhere preaching and have one come up and say you baptized me 50 years ago, or you told me what I was engaged in was sin. Though many do not respond so favorably, some do. It is the Gospel of Christ that will win souls to Christ and at the same time return our nation to the foundation that will please God. Won't you please consider helping us do that? It may not be the most lucrative work your son or grand-son can do, but it will be the most rewarding. We are looking for men who will say as Paul, "Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Ω

You may reach us by calling 304-845-8001, 1-888-418-4573 toll-free, fax us at 1-304-845-8410, or send a letter to P. O. Box 785 Moundsville, West Virginia, 26041. Dirwvsop@aol.com



Slothful in Work


D. Gene West

In Proverbs 18:8, Solomon spoke of the negative and harmful effects of one who is a talebearer, or what we would call a gossip. In the next verse the wise old King wrote at the Holy Spirit's behest: **He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.** (Proverbs 18:9) The Bible has somewhat to say about the value of work and those who refuse to engage in it. In 2nd Thessalonians 3, Paul, also at the Spirit's behest condemned brethren for being lazy, refusing to work and running from house to house peddling gossip. He called it walking disorderly and commanded the Church to withdraw fellowship from them. Then, he instructed them on who is a true Christian and who is not. Paul was especially opposed to those who were turning away from the Truth to a life of dissipation manifested by their refusing to work and spending their time being busybodies in other men's affairs. He told them in essence to stay home, mind their own business and do their work. He made the matter even clearer when he said: **If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.** (2 Thessalonians 3:10b) Even in the Garden of Eden which was a perfect paradise, God commanded His creatures to work—tending the Garden, for work is both honorable and healthy.

Solomon said that one who is slothful (lazy) in his work is a "brother to him who is a great destroyer." This is a chilling, yet interesting comment. The word "destroyer" in our text is very interesting because it means "to corrupt by ensnaring." Hence, as an animal is caught in a trap and subsequently destroyed, or dies and experiences corruption within the trap, so it is with the lazy man. The idea seems to be that the slothful worker, if indeed he can be called a worker, has little or no value to the one who hires him to complete a task. There seems to be a connection between this verse and the one before it in which the Wise Man said, **The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.** Israel's wise King spoke of the tragedy of tale bearing, then connected that tragedy with that of being slothful in work. Often refusing to work and engaging in gossip go hand in hand as they did in Thessalonica. George Lawson commented: "Slothfulness in

business is commonly a companion of tale-bearing; and both of them are more dangerous iniquities than men generally apprehend, and need to be seriously and frequently remonstrated against" (Commentary on Proverbs 437). Paul commanded the brethren at Thessalonica to withdraw their fellowship from "some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:11). There is no virtue in being lazy!

Slothfulness is itself a form of corruption which brings to an end prosperity and happiness. Many a family has been destroyed by the ugly monster of laziness on the part of one of the leading partners. There is no way it can be justified. We should teach those around us to have a good work ethic by having such ourselves. Prosperity, either physical or spiritual comes not to those who are lazy in working and in practicing the Faith of Jesus (Romans 12:11). The watchword of the true Christian is zeal. Ω




Ed Melott (2002)
The work is going well here at the Steelton church, New Martinsville, WV. We recently experienced six baptisms and two restorations to faithfulness.

Alumni News

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Apologetics and Soul Winning (II)

Charles C. Pugh III

The ultimate goal of an evangelist of Christ is to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God . . ." (2 Cor. 10:4-5, ESV) so that individuals bring their thinking captive to the obedience of Christ. Could there be a greater challenge to evangelism than the philosophy that is influencing people to have "a general skepticism towards the idea that there is any significant truth or body of truths to know" (Conway 8)? God desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). However, postmodernism rejects truth and rationality and also rejects the very notion that language can absolutely communicate matters of ultimate meaning (cf. Groothius 239).

The primary perspective of the four Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as the Acts of the Apostles (the book of conversions) implies the close relationship of apologetics and evangelism. Although sometimes presented as such, the Gospel accounts are really not biographies of Jesus. They are apologetic treatises, or Christological compositions, whose purpose is to prove the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. The purpose of each of these accounts is not to provide a detailed life of Christ, but an apology for the messiahship of Jesus, which will result in the reader coming to believe in Him as the Christ (cf. John 20:30-31; McGarvey 12-14). Furthermore, the case for the deity of Christ is set forth in the various speeches delivered by the apostles and other early evangelists and recorded in Acts. There is a real sense in which each of these speeches, or sermons, is apologetical in its basic approach. The ultimate aim was to convert the hearers, but the means to this end was apologetical—the rational presentation of evidence that led to the conclusion that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 17:1-3; 26:22-29, et al).

Addressing apologetics and evangelism, Schaeffer stated,

. . . [P]eople [today] do not know that they are lost. . . . They do not believe there is right and wrong, they do not believe there is a God, they do not believe there is an absolute. . . . But our whole generation has a second sense of being lost which is valid, and that is they are without meaning in the world, without purpose, without morals . . . no final answers for anything. . . . This lostness is answered by the existence of a Creator. So Christianity does not begin with "accept Christ as Savior." Christianity begins with 'In the beginning God created the heavens (the total of the cosmos) and the earth.' . . . [A]ll the cultural, intellectual, or philosophic material is not to be separated from leading people to Christ. . . . **The whole thing is evangelism** . . . (181, 186, emp. added)

One of the second century Christian writers was Clement of Alexandria (ca. 140/160-215). He advocated that a knowledge of philosophy was of value for Christians "enabling them to expose the errors of [false] philosophers, to help pass from a simple to a more intellectual faith and to make the content of their faith more precise" (Ferguson 160). Clement wrote *Exhortation (Protrepticus)* which urged the reader to accept Christ. It is an Apologia, but it is more. "It is a missionary tract, full of love and concern for those for whom he is seeking to win. . . . He was so concerned for the welfare of those to whom he wrote that no effort was to be spared in the effort to . . . convince them and finally win them to Christ" (Green 253, 255). Here was one who understood the relationship of apologetics and evangelism. Nearly 1800 years later, Thomas B. Warren who, in my judgment, was the greatest Christian apologist in the twentieth century, illustrated the connection that apologetics and evangelism have during his historic 1978 debate with Professor Wallace I. Matson (University of California at Berkeley). I would urge every reader of this article to read and study *The Warren-Matson Debate* and, in light of the subject of this article—"Apologetics and Soul Winning"—note carefully Warren's final words (343-345) spoken before thousands who attended. These words compose one of the kindest, most loving appeals on behalf of Christianity, which I have heard or read. It was a passionate appeal to Dr. Matson, and all in attendance, to accept Christianity. Warren's final sentence in the context of this debate on the existence of God sums up, in a practical way, the relationship that exists between apologetics and soul winning. He said; "I'm not here to tell you about *me*, but about *Him who died for you*, that you might live forever" (345). Apologetics and Evangelism meet on the pathway to Christian faith with the goal of belief in, love and obedience to Jesus Christ. Ω

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