



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

PUBLISHED AS A MISSION PROJECT OF PILGRIMS HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

Vol. XXIX, No. 12

December 1, 2003

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SPECIAL ISSUE: IS THERE AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AS SOME TEACH?

God alone determines age of accountability

By Dr. Joel Lucas

(From Denham Springs News, Denham
Springs, LA, March 3, 1988)

The question continues to Arise: "What is the age of accountability?"

Nowhere in the Bible do we find a particular age reference. The Bible does tell us a lot about children. Jesus rebuked his disciples and said, "Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these . . . whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a small child shall not enter it at all." (Mark 10:13)

The disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a child to Himself and stood in their midst. Jesus said:

"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea . . . See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." (See AGE, Page 2, Left Col.)

IS THERE AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

By Wayne Camp

(Originally published December 1, 1991)

On this page is an article by Dr. Joel B. Lucas, a Southern Baptist pastor from Denham Springs, LA. It was handed to me over several years ago and I have intended to answer it at some time. Recently, three different persons have asked me to deal with the subject of an age of accountability. [Editor's Note: This subject has come up again on several occasions in 2004.] I hope to satisfy those requests in this one message.

So that you may know in advance how I will approach the matter, I plan to follow this pattern. We will first review the article by Dr. Lucas. I have printed it in full so that you may see that I am dealing with it honestly and in context. It was not part of a series. It stood alone. Then we will look at the word **accountability** along with its synonyms and see if the Bible ever mentions an age of accountability. We will then question the teaching of a doctrine which most admit has no solid scriptural backing. Next we will examine the story of the prodigal son and see that the parable is misapplied when used to teach that there is an age of accountability. We will also consider some of the dangers of this unscriptural doctrine. Other things may arise as we pursue this matter, which will also be given consideration but this will give the reader a (See, ACCOUNTABILITY Cont. P. 2, Rt. Col.)

THE GRACE PROCLAIMATOR AND PROMULGATOR (USPS #000476) is published monthly (subscription free) by the authority of Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church, 3084 Woodrow, Memphis, TN 38127. Periodical postage paid at Memphis, TN 38101.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GRACE PROCLAIMATOR AND PROMULGATOR**, 3084 Woodrow, Memphis, TN 38127

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(Age, Cont. From Page 1, Left Column)

These passages teach that children are a heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127.) They are always kept in God's grace and they are examples for mature, rational adults to follow. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18:11.)

Jesus leaves us with the understanding that children are in God's grace because they have never refused God's grace. Sin is the problem of the mature person and not the problem of the child. (Romans 1: 18-3:26.)

David, the king of Israel, had a child that died. David said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:18) (See Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; 2 Corinthians 12:14; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4.)

"Lost" means a person has made a conscious and deliberate choice not to accept God's will of grace in his life. The choice is a deliberate choice against God . . . not against parents, friends, teachers, etc.

Children may disobey parents and they may do things contrary to Biblical teachings, but they have not committed the sin of condemnation until they deliberately and consciously make the choice to disobey God's grace for salvation.

When this choice is made, the child is accountable to God for his sin.

What is the age of accountability? Only God in his wisdom knows. The age of accountability most probably comes to some earlier than others because of Christian homes, Christian education, early Bible learning and church attendance.

We can be sure that God, cares for all children.

(ACCOUNTABILITY Cont. From P 1, Rt. Col.)
general idea of our approach.

A CRITIQUE OF DR. LUCAS' ARTICLE

In answer to his question, "What is the age of accountability?" Dr. Lucas said, "Nowhere in the Bible do we find a particular age reference. The Bible does tell us a lot about children."

I am wondering why the brother did not go ahead and say, "Nowhere in the Bible do we find a reference to an age of accountability." He leaves the distinct impression that there is a reference to an "age of accountability" but that the specific age is not mentioned because, as his title suggested, God determines the age for each person. His title and his answer obviously imply that there is such a thing as "an age of accountability," but God keeps it a secret and one may reach that age at 5 years while another does not until, say 15 years. If the Bible **does**, in fact, teach an age of accountability, why did not the brother give us a Bible reference that says there is such?

He is right when he says, "The Bible does tell us a lot about children." But, does it ever tell us that there is an **age of accountability** for those children? While the Bible "tells us a lot about children," I will show later in this message, that the Bible never mentions an age of accountability for those children. One must go somewhere beyond Holy Writ to find that doctrine.

Dr. Lucas also said, "These passages (those he had just quoted) teach that children are a heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127). They are always kept in God's grace . . ." It is true that children are a heritage of the Lord. He gives them to their parents as he wills. The problem I have is that Dr. Lucas says, "They are always kept in God's grace . . ."

Later he says, "'Lost' means a person has made a conscious and deliberate choice not to accept God's will of grace in his life." Of children he says, "They have not committed the sin of condemnation until they deliberately and consciously make the choice to disobey God's grace for salvation." I plan to deal with this unscriptural declaration in detail later, but for now notice that it is a contradiction of the declaration, "They are always kept in God's grace." If they are "always kept in God's grace" how could a child commit what Dr. Lucas calls "the sin of condemnation"? He said, "When this choice is made, the child is accountable to God for his sin." How could the child be held accountable, if he is "always kept in God's grace"? Moreover, do we not have here the doctrine of "falling from grace"? If a child is "always kept in God's grace," but then commits the "sin of condemnation" has he not fallen from grace?

But I must ask any who agree with Dr. Lucas, "Does this include all children, without exception? Was Judas Iscariot 'always kept in God's grace' even though Jesus had prayed long before the man was born, **'When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him . . .'** (Psa. 109:7, 12)?" And, what of the mother and male progenitors of Judas? Christ said of them, **"Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted**

out" (Psa. 109:14). Jesus said of Judas, **"Good were it for that man if he had never been born"** (Mk. 14:21). How could that statement be true, if as a child, Judas had "always been kept in God's grace"? Of Judas and others included in those who crucified him, Jesus prayed, **"Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness"** (Psa. 69:27). Were these "always kept in God's grace"? And, what of those **"who were before of old ordained to this condemnation"** (Jude 4)? Were these "always kept in God's grace"? What of **"the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction"** (Rom. 9:22)? Were these, even though vessels of wrath fitted to destruction "always kept in God's grace" while they were children? **"Esau have I hated,"** said God. Was he "always kept in God's grace" as a child?

Are children safe because of grace or works? Dr. Lucas says, "Jesus, leaves us with the understanding that children are in God's grace **because they have never refused God's grace**" (Emp. mine, RWC). That would be salvation by works, not grace. They are in grace because they have not committed a particular sin which the Dr. calls "the sin of condemnation." The children, according to him, are in grace because they have never refused grace. The Dr. frustrates grace, confuses grace. Grace ceases to be grace and works cease to be works when you mix the two. He says that children are in grace because they have not committed a certain sin. They have been good and have not committed that sin. That smacks of salvation by works, not grace. It is certainly a confusion and frustration of grace. How could they be kept in grace, if they are in it because of something they have, or have not done? Their standing is based upon their own goodness, not upon grace.

Another grave error of Dr. Lucas is seen in his statement, "Sin is the problem of the mature person and not the problem of the child." David said, **"Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"** (Psa. 51:5). Again he said, **"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies"** (Psa. 58:3). God said that the house of Jacob was **"called a**

transgressor from the womb” (Isa. 48:8). It sounds very much as if sin is a problem of the child, as well as the mature person. The child David was conceived in a state of sinfulness. We are all **“BY NATURE”** children of wrath, according to the Apostle Paul (Eph. 2:3). **By nature** refers to what we were in our natural birth. **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”** and in the flesh **“dwelleth no good thing.”** Man by nature, what he is naturally from his natural parents, is a child of wrath. He does not have to do anything to be in that state. He does not have to “commit the sin of condemnation” as is argued by Dr. Lucas.

Now, let us consider another statement of Dr. Lucas that reveals further his serious error on this matter. In one place in the article he quotes Matthew 18:11. **“For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.”** Later he says, “‘Lost’ means a person has made a conscious and deliberate choice not to accept God’s will of grace in his life. The choice is a deliberate choice against God . . . not against parents, friends, teachers, etc.” According to this definition of **lost**, the child who has not made this “conscious and deliberate choice” is not lost. Since Christ came to save the lost, and since the child who has not made this choice is not lost, those who die before reaching the “age of accountability” are not saved by Christ.

Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. The child who has not reached the age of accountability is not lost, according to Dr. Lucas. Therefore, Christ did not come to save that child, if he dies before reaching that mystical age alleged by the good brother.

Jesus was called Jesus because **“He shall save his people from their sins” (Matt.1:21).** But, Dr. Lucas tells us that “sin is . . . not the problem of the child.” Therefore, the child who dies in infancy cannot be saved by Christ because Christ came to save his people **“from their sins.”**

Paul tells us, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (I Tim. 1:15).** According to Dr. Lucas the child who has not reached the age of accountability is not a sinner for “sin is . . . not the problem of the child.” Therefore, according his reasoning, and

scriptural declaration, Christ did not come to save the child who has not reached the age of accountability. If that child were to die before reaching that mystical age, Christ **could not** be his Saviour for he came to save sinners.

Christ **“loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5).** Since “sin is . . . not the problem of the child,” children who have not reached Dr. Lucas’ “age of accountability” could not be included in this verse.

Christ **“was wounded for our transgressions,”** and **“he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).** But, “sin is . . . not the problem of the child.” Therefore, the substitutionary death of Christ was not for these children who have not reached the mystical “age of accountability.”

I could continue to stack scriptural proof upon scriptural proof that would show that Christ Jesus came to save sinners. According to Dr. Lucas, the child who has not reached the “age of accountability” is not included in the benefits of the death of Christ. If he is saved, it must be without the benefits of Christ for those benefits are for sinners. But, that raises another problem. Jesus said, **“No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”** Yet, his death and sacrifice were exclusively for sinners. If, as Dr. Lucas claims, “Sin is ‘not the problem of the child,’” then the child has no way to the Father for Christ came to save sinners. He came to call sinners, not the righteous.

Dr. Lucas also says, “Children may disobey parents and they may do many things contrary to Biblical teachings, but they have not committed the sin of condemnation until they deliberately and consciously make the choice to disobey God’s grace for salvation.” I ask, “Is not disobedience to parents a sin? Is not violation of Biblical teachings sin?” According to Dr. Lucas, “Sin is . . . not the problem of the child.” Does not the child sin when he disobeys his parents? Does not the child sin when he violates the teachings of the word of God?

I see another inconsistency in this erroneous article. First, Dr. Lucas says of these children, “They are always kept in God’s grace.” Then he has them making “a conscious and deliberate choice not to accept God’s will of grace” in their

lives. Then he has them coming to a point that “they deliberately and consciously make the choice to disobey God’s grace for salvation.” Why would they need to make any choice if they are already and “always kept in God’s grace”? They are already in grace, so why offer them grace? They are already kept by God in his grace so why preach they need to accept his grace? Why call on them to repent, if sin is not their problem? Why call on them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ if they are already kept in God’s grace?

Finally, Dr. Lucas asks, “What is the age of accountability?” He answers, “Only God in his wisdom knows.” I suggest to you that the mystical age of accountability is something that has originated in the mind of men, not in the mind of God. That we will consider further.

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

The reason those who affirm there is an “age of accountability” are so inconsistent in their efforts to prove and explain it while admitting that there is no scriptural evidence of such a mystical age. This is seen in Dr. Lucas’ question and answer, “What is the age of accountability? Only God in his wisdom knows. The age of accountability most probably **comes to some earlier than others** because of Christian homes, Christian education, early Bible learning and church attendance.” Notice the uncertainty in his answer to his question. He knows there is an age of accountability but he does not know what it is. He thinks that it “probably comes to some earlier than others.” The reason that it probably comes to some earlier than others is because they live in a Christian home, or have had Christian education, early Bible learning, and/or have gone to church regularly. I repeat. The reason for such uncertainty is the lack of biblical evidence for an “age of accountability.”

I have the complete Bible on my computer. I can search for any word or group of words and find them every time they appear in the Bible. I have searched for age of accountability and I can assure you that not one prophet ever mentioned such. I can assure you that Jesus never referred to such an age. I can assure you

that it never appears in all the sermons of the apostles. Not one inspired writer ever uses the term.

Amenable is a synonym of accountable. I assure you that not one inspired writer or speaker ever mentioned an “age of amenability.”

Responsible is also a synonym of accountable. Again, no inspired writer has ever mentioned an “age of responsibility.”

Answerable is another synonym of accountable. No writer of Scripture, and no God-called preacher whose sermon is recorded in Holy Writ, ever made mention of “an age of answerability.”

Liabile is another synonym of accountable. I searched, without success, for one mention in Holy Scripture of an “age of liability.” It simply was not there.

After a fruitless search, I must conclude that the “age of accountability” is a fabrication of man, not a revelation from God. It is a doctrine of man, not a doctrine of the word of God.

DOES THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON TEACH AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

Though Dr. Lucas made no mention of it in his article, a popular argument for an age of accountability is based on the story of the prodigal son. In my early ministry, I heard and preached sermons on this. I remember a 3-point sermon on the prodigal that said the prodigal was A. Safe, B. Lost, and C. Saved. Generally the argument goes:

1. The prodigal was safe until he made the decision to leave his father’s house and go into a far country. Some even go so far as to say that those whom he symbolizes are **SPIRITUALLY ALIVE** until they make a deliberate and conscious decision to reject God’s grace and salvation. When they make that decision they die spiritually and are then lost.

2. The prodigal (and those whom he represents), being now dead in trespasses and sins go their own way and waste away in riotous living.

Finally, the prodigal (and those whom he represents) comes to himself, and of his own

motivation and will determines to return to the father's house and is then, because of his decision, born again, is saved, is spiritually alive again.

In short, this is the interpretation that is given to this parable in an effort to prove the "age of accountability." It is assumed that the prodigal was not accountable until the time that he left the house of the father. If this be the true teaching the parable, the elder son apparently never was lost; he never was dead spiritually; and he never needed to be saved.

Of course, this is not the teaching of the parable at all. "This parable was given as a result of the charge of the religious leaders of Israel that Jesus "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

The overall teaching of the parable is that there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents than over many self-righteous people who think they need no repentance (Lu. 15:7). The religious leaders of Israel did not think they needed to repent. They were the seed of Abraham and, according to them, had never been in bondage and did not need the redemptive work of Christ. Their self-righteous, impenitent attitude is epitomized by the Pharisee who prayed, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men."

The Jews looked upon publicans and sinners as Gentiles. The prodigal son represents them, as well as the Gentile nations. Early in the history of mankind, the Gentile nations went away from God, into a far country, and were given up to paganism. They were without Christ, **"being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope; and without God in the world"** (Eph. 2:11-12). For centuries God let them go. He did not send his prophets to them. His gospel was not preached to them. They were not called to salvation, as were Jews. Christ came and changed that. God, through Christ, began to visit the Gentile nations to take out of them a people for his name. This angered the Jews, as the elder brother was angered in the parable.

Much more could be said, but this is the basic teaching of this parable. It teaches that Christ came to call sinners, not the self-righteous to

repentance. There is not the slightest suggestion of an age of accountability in the parable. One must totally ignore the basic teaching and the primary lesson of the parable, if he uses it to teach an age of accountability. It simply does not teach an "age of accountability."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DANGERS OF TEACHING THERE IS AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY?

The doctrine of an "age of accountability" is fraught with many dangers. Not the least of these is that it leads to other errors in doctrine. It may also lead to a young person falsely assuming that he is all right and has no need of salvation.

DOCTRINAL DANGERS

We have already seen that this doctrine of an "age of accountability" will cause a person to deny the natural depravity of man. Dr. Lucas stated this error as follows, "Sin is the problem of the mature person and not the problem of the child. Yet, as we have shown, David considered himself to be **"shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin."** Men come forth from the womb speaking lies. Can a child lie? Do children lie? Is lying a sin?

Another error that goes with this doctrine is the denial that children are dead in trespasses and sins. Did Christ die for those children who die before they reach this mystical age of accountability? Most will readily answer, "Yes." If he did, then they must have been dead in sin just as those who reach the age of accountability. Paul said, **"If one (Christ) died for all, then were all dead (2 Cor. 5:14).** To deny that children who have not reached this imagined "age of accountability" are dead in sin is to deny that Christ died for them. The very fact that he died for one is an indication that that one was dead in sin.

Christ died for the ungodly and sinners. Yet, those who deny that sin is a problem of children, deny that Christ died for children. Unwittingly, those who teach this doctrine deny those who die before reaching the age of accountability any interest in the death of Christ. **"In due**

time,” said Paul, **“Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6)**. If the child is not among those who are ungodly, then Christ did not die for him. **“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8)**. If the child does not have the sin problem, he has no interest in Christ, for Christ died for sinners.

Those who teach an “age of accountability” would deny that the child below that age is in the bondage of sin. Remember what Dr. Lucas said. “Sin is . . . not the problem of the child.” If sin is not the problem of the child; the child certainly could not be in the bondage of sin. Only those who have been redeemed from the bondage of sin will be able to sing that new song in heaven—**“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9)**.

THE DANGER OF GIVING CHILDREN FALSE HOPE

I see another danger of this doctrine that there is an age of accountability. It is the danger of giving false hopes to children. One mother confessed to me just recently that she had told her children several times that they were “safe” and did not need to be saved yet.

As mentioned before, the prodigal son is used as a type of one reaching the age of accountability. This is a sad mistake. That boy was old enough to go to his father and ask for his inheritance. He was old enough that his father turned much money over to him. He was old enough that the father permitted him to leave on a long journey. He was old enough that he could travel alone into a far country. He was old enough to waste his substance in riotous living. He was old enough that the elder brother charged him with having devoured what the father gave him with harlots (Lu. 15:30). He was old enough to get a job feeding swine. If he is a type of a child who comes to the age of accountability, then one must not reach that age until his grown. To use this young man as a type of one reaching the age of accountability is to suggest to children that they are safe until they reach adulthood. It gives them false hopes and false security.

After I had written all that appears above this point, and some of what follows, I received a paper from a long-time friend, who believes in an age of accountability. We have disagreed over other things and have remained friends, and I suspect that friendship will continue after this. In his headline he asks, **“WHICH SINNER ARE YOU?”** Then he has a diagram that lists three kinds of sinners:

SINNER SAFE—SINNER LOST—SINNER SAVED

After the diagram he writes in part, “You, as a sinner, fall into one of three categories. You are either a SAFE SINNER, a LOST SINNER, or a SAVED SINNER.”

“If you are a SAFE SINNER, you have not reached the age of accountability or you are mentally incapable of exercising the power of choice. The power of choice is given of God. In II Samuel 12:23, David referred to his seven day old child as having departed from this life and gone to be with the Lord. ‘BUT NOW HE IS DEAD, WHEREFORE SHOULD I FAST: CAN I BRING HIM BACK AGAIN? I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME.’ These things are especially comforting to mothers and fathers whose child died in infancy.

“The LOST SINNER is a sinner who is old enough to make a choice; one who has reached the age of understanding, but has of his own free will rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.”

While my friend does not deny that the child who has not reached this mythical “age of accountability” is a sinner, he speaks of him as a “SAFE SINNER.”

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, not that which was safe. Did Christ die for safe sinners or for lost sinners?

SUGGESTS THAT SIN IS NOT SIN WHEN COMMITTED BY A CHILD

This doctrine, at least as expounded by Dr. Lucas, suggests that a child does not sin, even when he does things that would be sin for an “accountable” person. Again, recall this statement of the brother. “Sin is the problem of

the mature person and not the problem of the child.” That is tantamount to saying that children do not sin. He goes on to imply that when children disobey parents and do things contrary to Biblical teachings they do not sin.

TEACH ONE MUST REJECT CHRIST DELIBERATELY TO BE ACCOUNTABLE

Look at what the two writers whom I have quoted said:

Dr. Lucas wrote, “‘Lost’ means a person has made a conscious and deliberate choice not to accept God’s will of grace in his life. The is a deliberate choice against God . . . they have not committed the sin of condemnation until they deliberately and consciously make the choice to disobey God’s grace for salvation.”

My friend, whose paper I just received about an hour ago, said, “The LOST SINNER is a sinner who is old enough to make a choice; one who has reached the age of understanding, but has of his own free will rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.” Then he quotes **Jn. 3:18**, **“HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED: BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, BECAUSE HE HATH NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.”**

According to the scriptures, why are persons condemned? Does the Bible ever say that one is condemned ONLY after he has consciously and deliberately rejected Jesus Christ? Dr. Lucas gave no scripture for his declaration. My friend gave Jn. 3:18 to substantiate his argument that one is only a “LOST SINNER” after he “is old enough to make a choice; one who has reached the age of understanding, but has of his own free will **REJECTED** the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.” I am not denying that the Christ rejecter is condemned and lost! Let that be clearly understood. I am asking if one must consciously, deliberately, and of his own free will reject Christ to be lost and condemned?

If one must consciously, deliberately, and of his own free will **REJECT God’s grace**, or the Lord Jesus Christ to be lost and condemned, then the perfectly rational, intelligent, and understanding 80 year old ungodly, idolater who

has never heard of Jesus Christ is neither lost nor condemned. For at least 4,000 years, 40 centuries, God left the majority of the Gentiles to their own ways. Our Gentile forefathers did not want to retain God in their knowledge and, early in history, they went after pagan and idolatrous gods. God gave them up to uncleanness and utter wickedness. For centuries they were given over to reprobate minds and no prophets were sent to them and they were not called to salvation (See Romans 1:18-32). During that long 40 centuries, Paul says that the **“Gentiles . . . were without Christ . . . having no hope, and without God in the world”** (Eph. 2:11-12). The gospel was not preached to them. God did not visit them. He left them to their own wicked ways and reprobate minds. They did not deliberately, consciously and of their own free wills reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Most of them never heard of him. Therefore, if one must deliberately, consciously, and of his own free will **REJECT** Jesus Christ to be lost and condemned, heaven will be overrun with these godless, vile, unrighteous, fornicating, wicked, covetous, malicious, envious, murderers, whoremongers and sodomizers (Rom. 1:24-31). Since they did not retain God in their knowledge all those centuries they knew nothing of Jesus Christ. Therefore they could not have consciously, deliberately, and of their own free will rejected him.

But, let’s look at the proof text. Does it say that men are condemned and lost because they have consciously, deliberately, and of their own free will rejected Jesus Christ as their Saviour. **NO! NO! NO!** It says they are condemned because they have not believed on Christ. **“He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”** Now, Paul asks, **“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14)**. One who has never heard of Jesus Christ is an unbeliever because he cannot believe on him of whom he has not heard. Jesus did not say, in Jn. 3:18, that men are lost and condemned because they have consciously, deliberately, and of their own free will rejected Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Rather, he says they are **“condemned already, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED in**

the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

John the Baptist said, ***“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn. 3:36).***

Why does the wrath of God abide on them? Because they have not believed on the Son of God? Why are men condemned? Because they have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Why are the descendants of Adam children of wrath? Is it because they have deliberately, consciously, and of their own free will rejected Jesus Christ and God’s grace of salvation? No! We are all ***“BY NATURE the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3).***

CONCLUSION

As I conclude this message, there is so much more that I realize we could discuss. I may yet deal more with the subject, but not at this time. Two things are very apparent:

First, no writer, prophet, or preacher of the Scriptures ever spoke of an “age of accountability.” Therefore, we have no scriptural authority for teaching that there is such.

Second, the doctrine of an age of accountability is fraught with many dangers. While it may give comfort to some who have lost children in infancy, it is a shallow comfort since there is no word from God on the matter. It may also give comfort to many who are condemned sinners.

Third, it could serve to damper the spirit of evangelism. About 30 years ago I heard an argument between two Missionary Baptist preachers on what is commonly called “the heathen question.” One of them argued loudly and fervently that one who has never heard the gospel is a “SAFE SINNER”. He said, “If there were a remote island somewhere in the world inhabited by 1,000 people and they had never heard the gospel, they would all be safe, and would go to heaven if they never heard the gospel.” His argument that followed was much as that advanced by Dr. Lucas and my friend. He held that one must hear the gospel of Christ, and, of his own free will, make a conscious, and deliberate choice to reject Jesus Christ before he is a “LOST SINNER” or is “CONDEMNED”.

Obviously, one cannot make that conscious, deliberate, of his own free will choice without hearing of Jesus Christ. Therefore his thousand residents of that remote island would be SAFE unless someone went there and preached the gospel. This man believed in missions. He believed that someone should go to that remote island and preach the gospel even though it might mean some would go to hell because they rejected Jesus Christ. On the other hand, they would go to heaven if they never heard him.

Dear Readers, men are condemned because they have not believed on Christ, not because they have overtly, consciously, deliberately, made an outright decision to reject Christ. Those who have never heard of him have not, and cannot believe on him. If you have never believed on Christ, you are condemned already, you are by nature a child of wrath, and the wrath of God abides on you. If you have believed on Christ, you can never come into condemnation for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ (Jn. 3:18; 3:36; Eph. 2:3; Jn. 5:24, Rom. 8:1).

Note: Next Issue we will publish an article by Dr. Jarrell E. Huffman on this subject of an age of accountability.

Bouquets and Brickbats

OHIO: You need to read your Bible a little further, and you will find that it says "Even the demons know and try to pervert the Word of God. And my opinion is you fit this discription pretty well. Maybe you should tell the whole truth to what you tried so hard to pervert. May the Living God have mercy on your soul, because the Word also says "Touch not my anointed, do my prophets no harm", it also says" to judge with the same measure you want to be judged with". So think the next time you open your mouth to bad mouth someone trying to do something for God.

A 3 P.K. from Ohio

OHIO: Keep up the good work on the PK subject. It sure is strange how "hateful" some of these "do-gooders" are, isn't it? Don't grow weary in well doing.

WWW: It is a shame that pastors do not at least teach their church members the history of this and the other "holidays". They possibly are afraid to be associated with the "cultic" beliefs of JW's and others and fear reprisals from their flocks.

Let it remain a secular holiday with its various paraphernalia. Perhaps the humanists are doing a favor by taking Christ out of XMAS!

[Editor's Note: I seriously doubt that Christ has ever been in Christmas. I doubt he has ever been in any other mass of the Roman Catholic Church.]

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA: Warm greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ from here,

Bucharest, the capital of Romania, Europe.

WWW: I just wanted to let you know that I read your article and found it to be quite intriguing. Thank you for taking the time and informing others of your beliefs. I think this is truly honorable of you to be bold for Christ. Praise Jesus!!! I am a protestant Christian that attends a Baptist church. I have studied Catholicism off and on for the past 10 months, and I am definitely not in agreement with most, if not all, of their traditions. We do celebrate Christmas, and will continue to do so. But, I do plan to print out your article and place it in a safe place for future readings. Thank you again for sharing your beliefs. May God bless you!

Coffee And Baptism

(Ben Bogard, a Baptist debater wrote the following poem to demonstrate that

Scriptural baptism requires immersion in water.)

I have a pleasant story, which I wish to tell in rhyme,
About a circuit preacher, who lived in recent time.
He was a circuit rider, for good John Wesley's brand,
And rode the finest circuit, in all the blessed land.

At one of his good charges, some members, not a few,
Became quite sorely troubled, about the word "into."
The good Book says quite plainly, in Acts chapter eight,
"They went down into the water," as Baptist people state.

The preacher preached a sermon, of extra zeal and might,
And to his satisfaction, he set the passage right.
"Into" does not mean "into," but only "at" or "near by,"
They went down to the water, and got a small supply.

But near the place of worship, there lived a sister Brown,
And for her splendid cooking, she'd gained a great renown.
Her yellow-legged chickens, her luscious cakes and pies,
Had often made that preacher, roll up his weeping eyes.

And her delicious coffee, in all the circuit round,
The preacher oft admitted, its like could not be found.
So when he preached his sermon with extra power and length,
He loved, at the Brown's table, to revive his ebbing strength.

But sister Brown was a Baptist, the strongest in the land,
She oft reproved the Methodists, for changing God's command.
She heard the preacher's sermon, and thought the subject o'er,

Then asked him home for dinner, as she oft had done before.

She ground her good brown coffee, her kettle steaming hot,

And she put it "at" or "near by," the famous coffee pot.
She poured her guest a cupful, (I think it was no sin),
"But you forgot, dear sister, to put the coffee in."

"No, no, dear sir, that's coffee, I ground a good supply,
And put it at the kettle, ("into" is "at" or "near by").
By the logic of your sermon: (I thought it rather thin),
If "at" or "near by" is "into," I put the coffee in.

So if you will truly promise, no more such stuff to teach,
I'll go and make some coffee, in line with Bible speech.
And this time I will follow, instructions to the dot,
And put the coffee "into," not "at" or "near by" the pot.

—Ben Bogard—

DID CHRIST TAKE HIS BLOOD INTO HEAVEN?

By Billy Holladay

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:17. A fairly common teaching associated with this verse is that between the time of this meeting with Mary Magdalene and the one recorded in Matt 28:9, Jesus returned to heaven with his blood, which he had shed on the cross. It is said this was necessary to fulfill the types of the day of atonement. Once

a year on that day the high priest slew the sin offering for the people and carried the blood of the sacrifice "within the veil" (into the holy of holies in the tabernacle) and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat. Detailed instructions for the ceremony are provided in Leviticus 16. It is reasoned that Christ, having accomplished the sacrifice, then presented the sacred blood in heaven. The following is from I. M. Haldeman's **The Tabernacle Priesthood and Offerings**: "Immediately after the sacrifice was offered on the Brazen Altar the priest took the blood of the victim in a bason, went within the veil and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat. Our Lord fulfilled the type and symbol exactly. On the day He rose from the dead as antitypical high priest He ascended to Heaven and put His blood upon the throne of God . . ." Heb 9:12 is also considered relevant to this, ". . . by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

The types and shadows of the Old Testament were, in a sense, dynamic prophesies and they must certainly be fulfilled, as Jesus said (see Matt 11:13 and Luke 24:44). The question is, when did Christ fulfill the type of the high priest sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat? Was it at the cross or three days later in heaven?

This poses another question, was the mercy seat a type of something that was in heaven and that remained in heaven so that Jesus had to return to heaven in order to anoint it with his blood, or was it a type of Christ himself? Of Christ himself, as was the tabernacle itself and all that pertained to it. Heb 8:1 refers to him as "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Most agree that the mercy seat symbolized Jesus Christ. The following is a sampling. I. M. Haldeman (*ibid.*), "The mercy seat is a distinct symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ." A. W. Pink (**Gleanings in Exodus**), "Christ is the mercy seat." C. H. Mackintosh (**Notes on Exodus**), "Looking at the ark and mercy seat together, we may see in them a striking figure of Christ in His person and work." W.

L. Wilson (**Dictionary of Bible Types**), "Here we see a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom centers all the mercies of God and through Whom we receive mercy from God."

Instructions for the construction of the mercy seat are provided in Exodus 25:17-21, then in verse 22, Jehovah said, "**There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee . . .**" Who else or what else could this represent but the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the one and only mediator between God and man (I Tim 2:5); if anyone is ever to meet with and commune with God, it must be through him! Rom 3:25 speaks of Christ as the antitype of the mercy seat, "**Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation . . .**" Compare Heb 9:5, "**And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat . . .**" The word translated mercy seat in Heb 9:5 is the same word translated propitiation in Rom 3:25. W. E. Vine (**Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**) says, "Mercy seat . . . signifies the propitiatory, so called on account of the expiation made once a year on the great day of Atonement." **Young's Analytical Concordance** gives the word in both places as "place of propitiation." A. W. Pink also calls it a propitiatory: "The mercy seat, or better, "propitiatory," was the throne upon which the high priest placed the expiatory blood. It was not the place where propitiation was made—that was at the brazen altar—but where its abiding value was borne witness to before God" (**Exposition of Hebrews**). If the mercy seat was a type of Christ and the blood of the sin offering was applied to it, what was there in heaven for Jesus to apply his blood to that would fulfill the type? And what about the delay? As Dr Haldeman, correctly observed, "Immediately after the sacrifice was offered on the Brazen Altar the priest took the blood of the victim . . . and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat." He did not wait until three days after the offering was slain. Was there a breakdown between type and antitype? That cannot be!

During three indescribable, unspeakable hours of darkness, God laid on him, as the sin offering, the sins of his people, and Jesus Christ suffered nothing less than the second death. The old song says, "farther along we'll

know all about it," but I doubt that that's true of the agony our Lord endured. Through eternity we shall, no doubt, come to appreciate it more and more, but we shall never have the infinite mind of God and, therefore, shall never learn the full of the infinite suffering our Lord experienced on our behalf! His suffering at the hand of God completed, the Father turned the lights back on and the Son said, "**it is finished**" (John 19:30). Finished! The sin offering had been made; the holy and righteous God was propitiated! Justice was completely satisfied; the penalty was paid in full! Jesus then "**dismissed his spirit**" (Luke 23:46, margin). Almost immediately his side was pierced and the blood of the sin offering was then and there applied to the mercy seat as it ran down that dear body! There was no need for his blood to go anywhere else. He was the antitype of the mercy seat and his blood was poured out upon it. In him alone, "its abiding value is continually borne witness to before God." Nothing else could suffice, no matter how holy, heavenly or glorious; it must

be the Lord Jesus Christ himself who fulfills all the typical character of the mercy seat.

He was, at the same time, the high priest who offered the sacrifice ("**No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down . . .**" **John 10:18**), the sin offering which was offered ("**. . . but now once in the end of the world; hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many . . .**" **Heb 9:26b, 28a**), and the mercy seat (propitiatory) to which the blood was applied. Ere he was taken down from the tree, it was all done—all these elements of the day of atonement were accomplished.

That does leave a very solemn question: What then happened to his blood? This can be a very emotional consideration. One dear lady once said to me, "I just can't stand to think of his precious blood running down that old cross to the ground." Well, there are a lot of things that happened in the life and death of our Saviour that are hard sayings. Is it any easier to think on the rest of the humiliating and agonizing ordeal that he endured that same day? How about the thought of sinful men arresting and putting on trial in **their** courts the very one who gave them "**life and breath and all things**" (**Acts 17:25**)? Is the thought of him who was "**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners**" (**Heb 7:26**) being mocked, spit upon and literally beaten to a pulp by sinners any more palatable? Does the account of the Holy One hanging naked before the jeering throng sound any better? How sets the thought that the very Son of God shall bear open wounds from Roman spikes and spear forever and ever?

Another example from typology suggests that the unthinkable is exactly what did happen. Instructions for the regular sin offering tell us that the priest was to "**pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar**" (**Lev 4:30**). That is, all that was not used for the anointing of the altar. See also Lev 4:18, 25, 34, 5:9, 8:15, 9:9. I believe it is indeed the humbling truth of the matter that this old earth soaked up the blood of its creator. No wonder "**the earth did quake**

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