

# Orlando Bible Students Newsletter

Volume 24, Number 2

June 2023

## Christianity at the Crossroads?

It seems as if Christianity is at a crossroads. Some promote “Christian nationalism” while others mix politics and the Christian faith. Christianity is being pulled into such conflicts as gender identity and racial, social and income inequality. How should the follower of Jesus navigate these conflicts?

Shortly before his death, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “What shall be the sign of thy presence and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3 *Revised Version Improved Corrected*) How would they know when Jesus had returned? In his response Jesus said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be thereafter. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” (Matt. 24:21,22 *RVIC*) Jesus’ return would be identified by a great time of trouble.

Daniel prophesied about this same trouble in Dan. 12:1, *New American Standard Bible*: “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.” Michael (Christ) would stand up (return) and begin the process of bringing “the sons of your people” (Jewish people) back to their homeland. The reestablishment of Israel fulfilled this. At this time, Jesus would also reward his followers, “everyone who is found written in the book”

with a resurrection to the spiritual home he promised them.—John 14:2,3

Peter described this troubled time: “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10, *NASB*) The returned Jesus is bringing this present evil world of which Satan is the prince, to an end so he can replace it with his earthly kingdom. (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4) “But according to his promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth (Christ’s earthly kingdom), in which righteousness dwells.”—2 Peter 3:13, *NASB*

Meanwhile, there is a great separation taking place in Christianity. The parable of the wheat and the tares promises the tares (imitation Christians) would be separated from the true Christians, grouped together in bundles, and exposed as imposters. (Matt. 13:23-30,36-43) Similarly, Jesus’ parable of the dragnet describes a great separation between true, and imitation Christians at this time. (Matt. 13:47-50) The conflicts mentioned above are doing that separation.

Not everyone today, who says they are a Christian, is a true follower of Jesus. In this trouble, the true Christians will be separated from the false and receive the great spiritual reward God has promised. The imposters will have a chance for an earthly salvation in Christ’s kingdom.—1 Cor. 2:9; 1 John 3:2

To learn more, see our offer for the free booklet *The Church* on the back page of this newsletter. ■

## Precious Promises

To those striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the Apostle Peter writes that God has given “great and precious promises.” These are the promises that enable one “to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.” (2 Pet. 1:4, *New Living Translation*) God’s promises are sure and steadfast, unlike those of fallen mankind, which often are made but too seldom kept. Our Heavenly Father’s words will not “return unto him void,” the Bible states.—Isa. 55:11

In our opening verse, Peter makes two important statements about the power of God’s promises. First, they enable the Christian to be a partaker of the divine nature and gain a share in the heavenly kingdom. Second, these promises assist the follower of Christ to escape the many corrupt passions and human desires so prevalent in the world today.

Continuing his lesson, the apostle reminds us of our responsibilities in order to receive the full benefits of God’s promises. He says, “Make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.”—2 Pet. 1:5-7, *NLT*

The precious promises of God are found throughout the Bible. Two Old Testament examples are these assurances: “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” (Josh. 1:9; Isa. 26:3) From the New Testament, we have Peter’s concluding words of our lesson. “So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”—2 Pet. 1:10,11, *NLT* ■

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## Prophecies

Prophecies in the Bible can be very remarkable for those who choose to examine them. For example, the prophecy of Israel’s restoration to their homeland involving the great conqueror, King Cyrus of Persia. God, through the Prophet Isaiah, predicted over 150 years before Cyrus was even born, that Cyrus would be instrumental in rebuilding Jerusalem. (Isa. 44:28, 45:1-6) He would make it possible for the exiled Jewish people to return to their homeland from their Babylonian captivity. (2 Chron. 36:20-23) Thus, before King Cyrus was even born and rose to power, he was prophesied by name to give the exiled Jews permission to return to their homeland.—Ezra 1:1-4, 3:7, 4:3

The Prophet Daniel prophesied “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” plus there would be a remarkable increase of knowledge and people traveling “to and fro” in the “time of the end.” During this time, Israel would, after 26 centuries, be returned to their promised land. Daniel’s prophesy describes today!—Dan. 12:1-4

*(Continued on next page)*

# “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me”

*And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God,  
which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.  
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Exodus 20:1-3*

As professing Christians, these words should cause us to pause and reflect on the depth of our fear (reverence) towards the Heavenly Father. The Decalogue is a brief synopsis of the whole law given by God to Israel to show them where the line is drawn between righteousness and sin. Paul tells us that the Law was given to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin that leads to death. (Rom. 7:13) Always remember that God said he who lives the Law perfectly will be entitled to life and never die. (Lev. 18:5) The Law was meant to convince men of their sinful state and need of a redeemer.

Jesus was asked by one of the scribes and Pharisees to tell them what the greatest commandment was. “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22:37-40) We have the words of our Heavenly Father and those of the only man who lived the law perfectly, Christ Jesus. By this man’s obedience to God’s word, even unto death, we have the ransom paid for all to be resurrected in due time.

How fitting is it for the first command in God’s law to be that we show our love for the Creator by our desire to worship, praise and honor him above all else. Job, family, money, possessions, fame or power should never be placed above or even equal to our God. Love for our fellow man proves our love for the Heavenly Father. Acknowledging Jesus as our ransom for sin and redeemer, we glorify God, the author of the grand plan that will ultimately recover men from the bondage of sin and death. ■

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## **Prophecies** *(continued from previous page)*

The word prophecy in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *propheseia* which means “prediction”. The Bible is full of predictions, like those stated above and in other places like the book of Revelation. Fulfilled predictions of Scripture help to confirm the testimony of God’s written word as true and accurate. It strengthens the faith and convictions of a true Christian. If we study the Scriptures accurately, we can get a “fix” on the prophetic timeline—and have not only a better understanding of where we ARE on that timeline, but we can make better choices in how we think and act accordingly. Find out more about fulfilled prophecies and the Bible’s predictions of a better day ahead for the human race—a “golden age of prophecy”—by ordering *Studies in the Scriptures*.

For more information, please see our website page on *Studies in the Scriptures*: [www.orlandobible.org/bible-personalities/studies-in-the-scriptures](http://www.orlandobible.org/bible-personalities/studies-in-the-scriptures) ■

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### Calendar of Events

**Bible Students General Convention  
July 15-20, 2023**

University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown  
450 Schoolhouse Rd  
Johnstown, PA 15904  
(814) 269-7050

For further information contact:

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Or contact us at our website:  
**[www.biblestudentsgeneralconv.org](http://www.biblestudentsgeneralconv.org)**

The Orlando Bible Students is a non-denominational group that meets for Bible studies and devotions on Sunday mornings.

For further information call: 407-695-6815

### Special Offer

We would like to send you a complimentary copy of the booklet,

***The Church***

This booklet discusses the church of God developed during the Gospel Age—its organization, its requirements, how to join, its mission and its work once it has been completed.

For your **FREE** booklet, call 407-695-6815 and request a copy, or fill in your address below and mail this coupon to:

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