

CWWR *magazine*

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION



The Finished Work

Brad Jersak *page 3*

- Did Jesus Die for All? | Jim Fowler 7.
- Is Paris Burning? | Greg Albrecht 8
- Out of the Tribulation Closet | Laura Urista 10
- Fear Not! | Irene Frances 13
- Is the Bible Infallible? | Greg Albrecht 15

What Our Readers Are Saying...

Through Thick & Thin

You and your ministry have been with me through thick and thin. I have had many painful experiences directly and indirectly caused by legalistic religion. I didn't want to stop believing in God but I could not believe the religion that had oppressed me had much to do with him. PTM was there for me. My church was trying to rule my life, including decisions I was making—always judgment and condemnation. I always had to get "approval" before I made a decision. But PTM was there for me. Thanks to PTM, I very much believe in God, but now I live by his grace and I know that I am free in Christ—that is, free from oppressive religion!

Texas

Real Pastoral Care

A word of thanks. I am a pastor and when I need someone to counsel with, I call Greg Albrecht.

I have only known him for a few years, but he has become a trusted pastor to me. I am thankful for the ongoing work of CWR and PTM. I know how difficult it is to preach the gospel (and nothing but the gospel) in a world filled with religion. I can't tell you how many times the articles in your magazines, the audio messages from Greg, the books you publish and the monthly letters you send have given me a Christ-centered direction for my own sermons.

Thank you, as Paul said, for fighting the fight, running the race and keeping the faith. It means the world to me.

New York

The Bible comes alive!

I am amazed by your Christ-centered interpretations of Scripture. Years ago, I remember churches and pastors say that they made the "Bible come alive" but you do more than that! You shine light on Jesus who is the Light so that I can easily see him and his teaching, rather than denominationalism. You consistently model a Christ-centered way to study the Bible.

New Mexico

The ministry of PTM/CWR gives my wife and me hope, uplift and inspiration. We were in a legalistic church going nowhere fast (when it comes to following Jesus) when we first found your ministry. The change in our life is miraculous, and of course we give God all the credit, but we also thank you for allowing him to speak and teach through you!

Kansas

Dear Readers,



Your generous donations enable us to share this Christ-centered gospel and to inspire others to living faith in Jesus Christ.

A big thank you from all of us at CWR/PTM!

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The Finished Work

Brad Jersak

The *finished work* has become a popular catchphrase. This reassuring phrase comes to us from Christ's dying declaration of divine love's great victory. "It is finished!" he cries with his final breath (John 19:30).

Although Christ's last words were likely spoken in Aramaic or Hebrew, the Greek word John the Beloved uses to translate Jesus' words in his eyewitness account is *tetelestai* (from *teleo*, the verb form of the noun *telos*). This bit of linguistic trivia matters because to John, Jesus was saying something far more than "it's over." *Tetelestai* is a proclamation of fulfillment. The Hebrew scriptures and Christ himself prophesied his suffering and death and these are now fulfilled.

But *tetelestai* also speaks of completion—God's great plan has come to its **fullness**—redemption has been decisively **accomplished**. The New Covenant now stands as a **completed** or "*finished work*."

WHAT IS "FINISHED"?

Thus, the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth marks an *end* ... but what exactly has been finished, completed, accomplished or fulfilled? First, we might say that "***It is accomplished***" is the Father's full and final answer to his Son's request, "*Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing!*" It's as if we hear both sides of the Father-Son conversation through the Son's own mouth:

"Father, forgive!"

"Son, for you: consider it done!"

Amen. But this suggests some important questions. Does all forgiveness of sin occur at the Cross? Had God never forgiven anyone before Christ came? And had Christ never truly forgiven those he declared forgiven during his ministry?

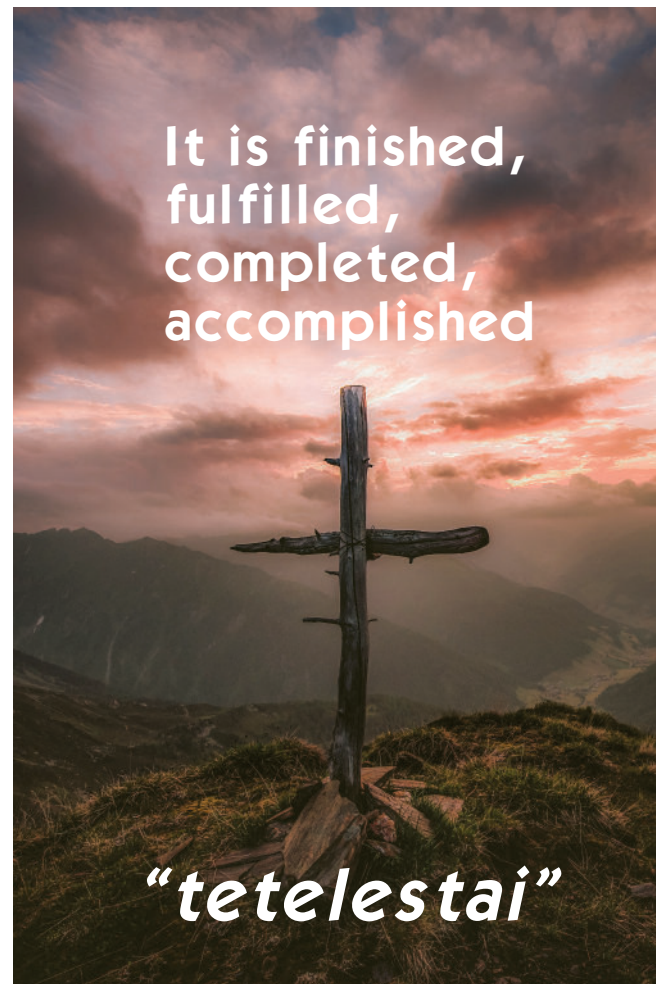
Was their forgiveness contingent on his forthcoming death? And how about after the Cross? Is asking for forgiveness after the Cross a denial of the "finished work"?

Did Christ not teach us to pray, "*Forgive us our*

trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us?" Or is that prayer defunct after Good Friday—a relic of the old covenant? Some think so. In fact, some of my friends say they are unable to pray the Lord's Prayer in good conscience for that reason.

Frankly, I don't buy it. But then how do we see forgiveness in relationship to "the finished work"? Briefly, the Scriptures describe forgiveness before the Cross, at the Cross and after the Cross:

Forgiveness before the Cross: The message of the prophet Hosea is that God has always been free to forgive from the very



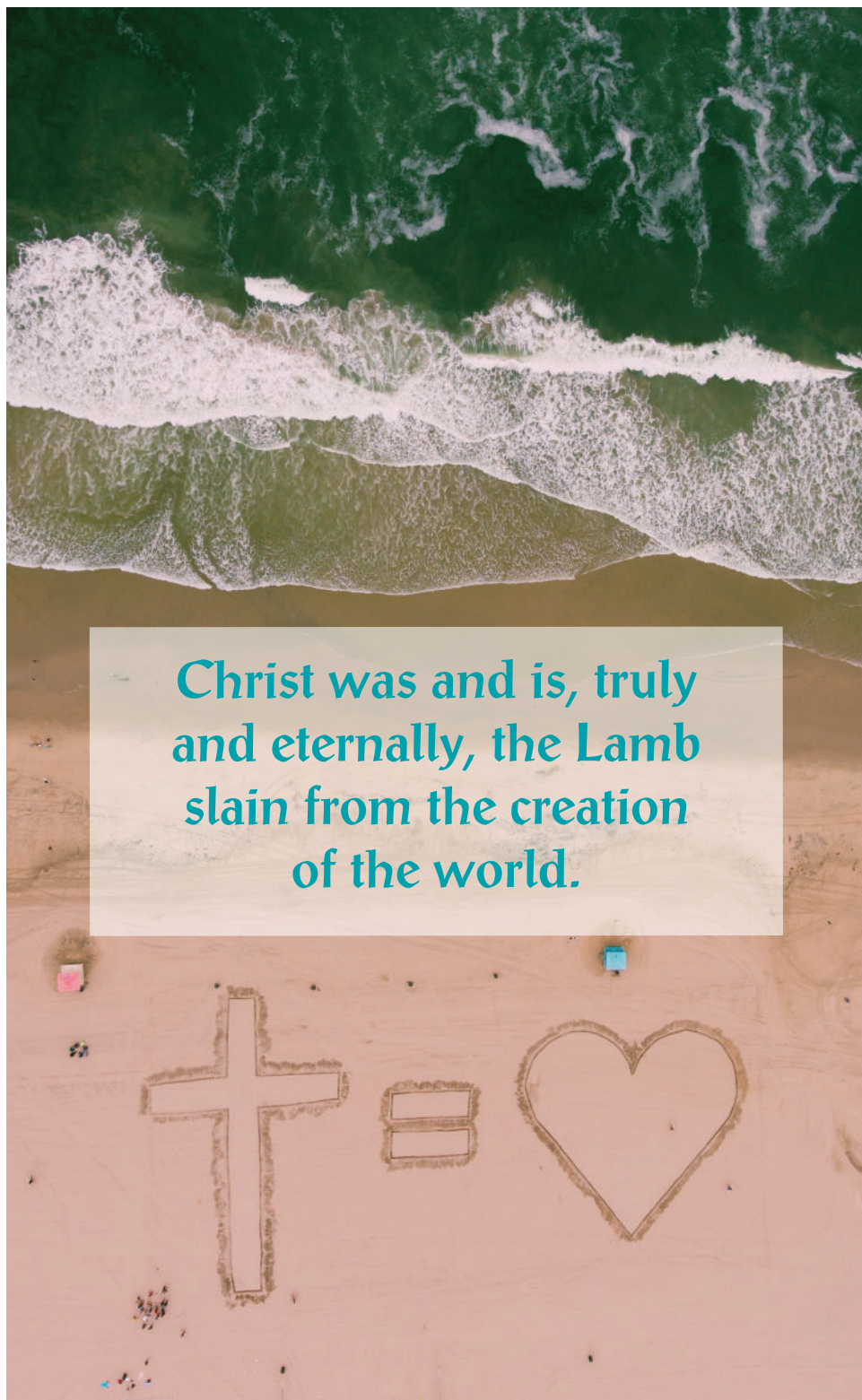
beginning, prior even to repentance. Christ spoke the words of forgiveness to many who had not even asked for it, and that kindness generated their response of love and faith. Forgiveness was not held in trust or waiting on deposit until Jesus died. It's a mercy that the people of God had experienced through the ages.

Forgiveness at the Cross: That said, the Cross is a "finished work" in that forgiveness and reconciliation are forever and always secured and sealed for all sin, for all people, for all time. At the Cross, Abba's forgiveness is totalized and universalized, stretched out as high, long, deep and wide as his infinite love through the intercession of his beloved Son.

Forgiveness after the Cross: If that is so, why would we ask for forgiveness? Is that not a denial of the efficacy of the "finished work"? Are we implying it's somehow *unfinished*? Not at all! Christ knows that with sin comes the guilt and shame from which emerge an impulse to hide. Like Adam and Eve, we experience alienation under the accusations of our frowning conscience.

Knowing this, Jesus prescribes a request for forgiveness so that we will come out of hiding, return to Abba's house and discover that we're *already* forgiven. The Lord's Prayer and the practice of confession do not secure a forgiveness that was not given. They orient us to the "finished work" so that we run boldly to Abba instead of away from him. We receive and enjoy the "done deal"—the request is simply a way to open our hands to experience the "finished work" today.

When the same apostle John writes, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9), has he so quickly forgotten the "finished work" he alone reported? Not in the least! Again, he's positioning us under the



cleansing waterfall of the "finished work" because we need to remember we're already forgiven, and in remembering, we allow Abba's love to wash out the sin itself and its effects.

For example, the cocaine addict who feels her powerlessness and shame is urged to become a truth-teller about her struggle (that's confession of sin) so

she can hear Christ say *“It is finished”* to her personally and can begin the journey of having the addiction itself cleansed. It’s not enough for her to know she’s forgiven. She also longs to be healed of the disease that drives her substance-abuse and to be freed from the chains of her addiction. To her, “It is finished” is great news heard in the context of the rigorously honest confession of her need.

THE “FINISHED WORK” DID NOT START AT THE CROSS

I find it necessary to clarify that the “finished work” did not actually begin at the Cross. Some preachers now actually teach everything Christ did or said prior to Good Friday was still an old covenant ministry to Jews and thus, not applicable to Christians. But while the work of Christ comes to its apex at the Cross, the new covenant project (aka kingdom of God) was initiated well before the nails were driven into our Lord’s hands. He was not just killing time or simply “born to die.” Let’s consider this by rewinding the Gospels from his Passion backward in time. Consider:

Christ forgave throughout his earthly ministry: He regularly announced God’s forgiveness to sinners prior to the Cross and even prior to their repentance. Forgiveness is a free act of grace on God’s part, not a *quid pro quo* transaction that first required repentance, restitution or punishment.

Christ announced the establishment of his new kingdom: We see him citing Isaiah 61 in his inaugural sermon at Nazareth, proclaiming the good news (gospel) of God’s Jubilee redemption. Having sat down, he says, *“Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* (Luke 4:21). Not “in three years when I’m crucified” but *today*. That’s why, from the beginning of his preaching ministry, Jesus said, *“The time has come,”* he said. *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:5). What

kingdom? What time? The era of the new covenant kingdom unveiled by God’s Son.

Christ’s new covenant ministry was announced at his baptism: Before Christ announced his kingdom through preaching, the Father, the Spirit and John the Baptist marked out his ordination at Jesus’ baptism. This is God’s beloved Son, the anointed Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. When the Lamb is slain on Good Friday? No. *Today!* But yes, because he *will be* slain. Immediately, Christ begins the “finished work” by entering the wilderness to face and overcome the tempter on our behalf. We might think of the wilderness tests as Christ’s D-day beachhead into the world of *this present darkness* (Ephesians 6:12 RSV). Or was it?

Christ’s new covenant life was initiated at his conception: Jesus’ “finished work” did not, in fact, begin at the Cross or in his preaching or in his baptism. The first landmark on the path to our redemption occurred when the Word became flesh. When deity and humanity were united in the womb of Mary in the person of Jesus Christ, that union marks the undoing of Adam’s fall and the dawning of a new humanity—the new covenant is launched. When God the Word assumed human nature, the incarnate Son set about redeeming humanity. This is the good news of the Incarnation and there’s *nothing* old covenant about that.

Christ’s “finished work” is already a done deal from eternity: It was entirely necessary for the “finished work” to transpire in time—the Incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection were non-negotiable space-time events. But also, what materialized in history has forever been true in the heart and nature of God’s eternal, self-giving love. For Christ was and is, truly and eternally, *the Lamb slain from the creation of the world* (Revelation 13:8).

THE “FINISHED WORK” DID NOT END AT THE CROSS

We’ve seen so far that the Cross can rightly be called “the finished work” because in his death, Christ “accomplished” forgiveness, redemption and reconciliation for all people. We’ve also seen that the redemption project preceded Good Friday in the birth, baptism and ministry of Jesus Christ. We now need to consider how “the finished work” unfolds beyond his crucifixion. That is, whatever “It is finished” meant to Jesus, he also foretold further acts pursuant to his cruciform triumph. These include at least five striking events without which the new covenant

would *not* come to its *telos* (fulfillment). They are:

- Christ's descent into *hades* to conquer death and rescue the dead;
- Christ's resurrection to become the firstborn of all the dead, ensuring our resurrection;
- Christ's ascension to the throne of grace at the right hand of his Father where he reigns as Lord of Love;
- Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit, poured out on all flesh on the Day of Pentecost;
- Christ's glorious second coming when he *consummates* his kingdom and makes all things eternally new.

when it's also being worked out in real life through the transforming work of the Spirit.

The apostle Paul describes a process: as we behold the glory of the "finished work," we are *being transfigured* from glory to glory into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). The word "*transfigured*" in verse 18 suggests a *metamorphosis*—a gradual but very real transformation. Our *telos* (what we shall finally become) will be perfect Christlikeness.

Here's a scandalous confession: I have not arrived. Nor have you. Some claim they have. Again, I'd like verification from their

through their denial. But for those open to serious reflection, I leave these questions for thought:

- Were Jesus' teachings old covenant? How would we read Luke 4?
- Are we ultimately Paul-followers or Christ-followers (like Paul was)? Did Paul understand the Kingdom of God better than God the Son?
- When Christ issues his "commandment" to love God and love your neighbor, do we regard that as legalism? Is his call to "obey" a trigger word? Do we imagine Jesus as a legalist who preached salvation by works?
- How do we understand our "participation" in grace?

Are we a docile Bride who never reciprocates God's love lest we are caught "striving," or do we actively join in the divine dance of relationship with the Holy Spirit?

- Is the message of *CWRm* too "*Jesuy*"? How shall we hear Greg Albrecht's rallying cry, "All Jesus, all the time"?

For our part, Christ's call to "*take up your Cross*" is an invitation to follow him on the Jesus Way. It is in no way contradictory to the "finished work" or the grace of the Holy Spirit, who transforms and empowers us for the Christlike faith and life. May God grant us all the grace and peace to *run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith* (Hebrews 12:1b-2a). □

Brad Jersak has served on PTM's editorial team since 2012.

How do we understand our "participation" in grace? Are we a docile Bride who never reciprocates God's love ... or do we actively join in the divine dance of relationship with the Holy Spirit?

The historic Christian gospel includes all these essentials *subsequent* to the "finished work," yet we also believe Jesus' truth that "*It is finished.*" How so? Because his ministry would be *dependent on* and *indivisible from* the "done deal" of the Cross. This becomes personal when I reflect on my own faith journey.

THE "FINISHED WORK" IS NOT FINISHED WITH ME

The "finished work" is not finished with me. If you need verification, ask my family. What Christ completed on the Cross is still being completed in me. We like to think of ourselves as "perfect in Christ" or "the righteousness of God"—that's all very well and good but only if or

spouse, partner and children. But I probably won't get it from the apostle John, who said,

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Some teachers blow off this passage as inapplicable to Christians because they can't see how it aligns with their interpretation of the "finished work," even to the extreme of denying there's such a thing as sin at all. By that point, I'm happy to give them the last word because I'm not here to break

Did Jesus Die For All?

Jim Fowler

to be redeemed and saved by the Savior.

On the other side of the theological divide are Christian thinkers who accept the theological thesis of “universal redemption,” that Jesus Christ died for every human person, past, present and future, even Pol Pot and Adolf Hitler. The substitutional and vicarious death of Jesus Christ on the cross “paid the price” to “buy back” every human being, bar none, from the consequences of sin that alienated man from God.

Some, failing to make the distinction between the objective act of God in redemption and the subjective response of human faith to receive eternal life in regeneration, make the mistake of attributing the efficacy of redemption to the faith-response of individuals, in essence indicating that human beings secure their own salvation by their own choice.

The scriptural evidence

(cont'd on page 14)

The world of Christian theology has long been polarized into differing camps on this question of whether Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for all mankind. The Augustinians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, followed by the Calvinists, aka “reformed,” have denied that the atoning death of

Jesus Christ was for every human being. Maintaining the thesis of “limited atonement,” their argument has been that Jesus died on the cross only for those who were in eternity past predestined as the “elect” of God

In 1944 the Allied armies were marching on Paris intent on liberating it from the German military. Adolf Hitler, realizing the inevitable, ordered his armies to burn Paris before leaving. Many believe that General Dietrich von Choltitz wrestled with his conscience before refusing Hitler's decree that Paris must be set ablaze. Apparently, Hitler's general could not bear to be responsible for such a craven act of destruction.

Hitler did not know of this insubordination until he was informed by his staff that the Allies had

liberated Paris. Hitler reportedly asked, "Is Paris burning?" It seems the evil monster that Hitler was would have gained some satisfaction if the entire city of Paris had burned to the ground. His attitude of revenge was, "If I can't have it, then no one will."

This question attributed to Hitler became the title of the definitive story of the liberation of Paris. *Is Paris Burning?* was published in 1965, written by Dominique Lapierre, together with Larry Collins.

One year ago (April 15, 2019), upon hearing of the fire at Notre Dame, the title of Lapierre's book, *Is*



Is Paris Burning?

Retrospective by Greg Albrecht

Paris Burning? immediately came to my mind. Paris has not burned, but the Cathedral of Notre Dame, one of the most famous and historical landmark buildings in Paris did burn.

CHRIST-CENTERED PERSPECTIVES

On two decades-ago visits to Notre Dame, I walked under the arch above the main doorway and its relief depicting the risen Lord Jesus Christ presenting the wounds in his hands to his followers to assure them of his forgiveness and of their salvation. On one side of him is the cross, on the other side is the spear that pierced his side.

Underneath this illustration, Satan and his demons are sculpted feverishly trying to corrupt the scales of justice—the justice of God’s grace—by tilting it in such a way that God would punish sinners.

Ironically, Notre Dame burned during Holy Week. In one of the well-known photos of the effects of this devastating fire, photographer Ludovic Marin captured an eternally significant image for followers of Jesus everywhere. The photo shows debris from the fire, with charred ruins littering the sanctuary, but there, on the altar, stands the cross.

In one sense, the cross of Jesus was a fire. The cross of Jesus was the fire of God’s love consuming all human hatred and violence. The incarnate God, in the person of Jesus, voluntarily allowed his human body to be “burned” and destroyed. In Christ, all human animosity and enmity were burned up and Jesus overcame death and the grave.

To the religious authorities who despised him and asked for a sign that he was greater than their religion Jesus simply said, “Destroy this temple [his body] and I will raise it again in three days” (John 3:19). From the burned debris and charred remains of what was left of his once and forever demonstration of love, Jesus rose from the ashes.

Jesus came to be one of us and he came to be crucified. He came to our world—a place of suffering and pain and of gnashing of teeth. He came to our world—a place of hatred and violence and of sorrow and mourning. The world then, and the world now, is a place of destruction and death. In Christ God came to the cesspools and swamps of our world, because of his great love.

JESUS CANNOT BE BURNED NOR BURIED

The religious authorities in Jesus’ day thought that by arranging for Jesus to be crucified, they had “burned up” and put to death the impact of his life and teachings. They thought Jesus was over and done with. They thought that they were free from Jesus. They were surprised and shocked to hear that Jesus’ body was not where they wanted it to be—dead and buried in his tomb.

Hitler, too, was surprised to hear that his orders had not been carried out—Paris was not burning. Paris was liberated.

Jesus did not stay dead as the religious authorities wanted. He didn’t “know his place” as it were. Jesus did not remain where they put him.

Have you noticed? Jesus isn’t contained within the boundaries drawn by our world. Our risen Lord rose from the ashes on Sunday. He lives so that we too might live.

Unlike the Notre Dame cathedral, our risen Lord needs no building fund to help him rise from the dead. We need not worry about scurrying around helping him rise from the dead. All the work it takes is done. All that needs to take place for God to love you now and forever is complete. It’s over. It’s all over, except for the shouting. So, let the victory cry be shouted from every hamlet, village and city, “He is risen. He is risen indeed.”

Great cities and empires and civilizations have a shelf life. Buildings, including church buildings, come and go. They are subject to floods, fires and earthquakes. Our faith does not lie in religious buildings, artifacts or icons. Our faith is in Jesus, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). He is risen. *He is risen indeed.* □

Greg Albrecht is president of Plain Truth Ministries.

OUT OF THE TRIBULATION CLOSET

LAURA URISTA

I was watching a favorite TV program when a strange advertisement for peanut butter grabbed my attention. The commercial went something like this:

As a young woman runs through an abandoned street, with smoke and ash falling all around her, a young man beckons her to enter an underground shelter, similar to a tornado shelter you might see on a farm in the Midwest. The young woman enters, obviously relieved and thankful to be safe. As her eyes take in her new surroundings, she notices the walls are filled with shelves of provisions.

On further scrutiny, she realizes the shelves are stocked with a generic brand of peanut butter. The realization causes her to shake her head and she darts out of the shelter, back into the destruction of a fiery war zone. She runs into a half-demolished warehouse and pulls out the brand of peanut butter she prefers, takes a spoonful and smiles. Then the slogan appears, “[Brand]— so good you’d brave the Apocalypse for it.”

EMERGENCY SUPPLY CLOSET

Clever? Undoubtedly. Humorous? Perhaps. But for me,

seeing that short peanut butter commercial instantly took me back fifty years, to a terrified seven-year-old girl, as memories flooded my mind of the emergency supply closet in my childhood home. Many families have emergency supplies on hand in case of a natural disaster. That isn’t a bad thing. In fact, it is actually a necessity in many areas of the world. But there was a much deeper, sinister reason behind my family’s closet full of provisions.

My brother and I were told to never open that closet door or touch the emergency supplies. I got spanked for “stealing” a few crackers from it one time when I was terribly hungry and there was little or nothing in the kitchen cupboards or fridge easily accessible for a small child to eat.

You see, the supplies in that closet were meant to be used only for the *End-Times* (see glossary). Similar to the idea of being “left behind” from the *Rapture* (see glossary), my parents feared they might not qualify to escape the coming wrath and judgment of God upon mankind.

As an adult, I came to refer to our family’s emergency supply closet as “The *Tribulation* Closet.” Growing up with such a tangible

symbol of that looming, inevitable apocalyptic *tribulation* (see glossary) just a few doors away from my own little bedroom definitely messed with my head as a kid, to say the least.

I grew up believing that no matter how many good things you try to do, and no matter how hard you try to obey your parents, teachers, ministers and ultimately God himself, you just never know for sure if you’ll be deemed good enough to escape the “soon-coming” tribulation or not. You might try your hardest, but if God was angry you would be punished or killed.

TOXIC IMPACT OF THE CLOSET

As I grew from a child into a teen and young adult, this “tribulation closet” mentality continued to have a huge impact on my life. I lived with a constant fear of never knowing whether I might wake up one day in a horrific war zone, all because I or my parents didn’t do enough to “qualify” for God’s salvation.

Beyond that, I was constantly afraid of disappointing my parents and family by not measuring up to God’s holy standard. By age nine, this constant heightened state of anxiety began to manifest itself

... a young woman runs through an abandoned street, with smoke and ash falling all around her, a young man beckons her to enter an underground shelter similar to a tornado shelter you might see on a farm in the Midwest ...

in the form of headaches, recurring nightmares, stomach troubles and eventually nervous hives. I remember that my mom used to wash and double-rinse all my clothing, bedding, towels—everything that came into contact with my skin—thinking I had an allergy.

I didn't know why I was having these physical manifestations of anxiety until I was much older. As a young adult, my intense fear and anxiety finally began to subside, but occasionally I would get nervous hives before a big exam, speech, job interview or presentation.

In my early thirties, I went to counseling, and I finally got some real help in dealing with the deep-seated fear of being "left behind" and all the terror that might entail, along with the idea that I could never measure up.

Now, as I look back at those errant teachings and their impact on my life, I realize that I allowed fear to paralyze and hold me captive in many ways. I made choices in my life based on fear—fear that I wouldn't or couldn't be good enough to be saved. Fear that I wouldn't live long enough to go to college, get married or have children one day.



Photo by Toni Oprea
Romania

DISTORTED VIEW OF GOD

In retrospect, I recognize that fear played a role in my relationships with my parents, friends, coworkers, bosses, my husband and especially with God. Talk about “trust issues”! How could I ever trust a god who would allow his children to be taken captive, tortured and destroyed? How could a “loving Father” kill his own Son, or allow him to be killed to satisfy his “wrath”? If God did that to his only Son who was perfect, how much more would he do to me, a sinner?

What a profound difference there is between those errant teachings of my religious past and the TRUE gospel Jesus taught. Jesus came to show us his loving *Abba*—his kind, compassionate and caring “Daddy.”

Contrary to what many preachers *say* the Bible teaches, God did not torture or kill his Son. Humans were responsible for those errant teachings, and humans were responsible for Jesus’ beating and crucifixion.

In fact, humans have always been responsible for the atrocities of captivity, slavery and all the evils of war. But God always has been and always will be simply divine, perfect love—and “*perfect love drives out fear*” (1 John 4:18). □

Laura Urista is managing editor of CWRm and a survivor of the alleged tribulation.

Tribulation Fever by Brad Jersak

Some of our readers will recognize Laura’s experience from their own religious history. My childhood in the Baptist church was also infected with a tribulation fever of sorts. Our version was caught up in the Hal Lindsay’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, the top-selling book on all things rapture, tribulation, Antichrist and Armageddon.

My childhood imagination was ignited with the hellfire prophecies of Jack Chick Comics, Larry Norman’s haunting lyrics (“You’ve been left behind”) and the Evangelical horror movie, “Thief in the Night.” We were programmed to believe Christ would rapture away the true believers so we’d miss the Great Tribulation, but woe to those who’d be left behind.

It was thrilling and terrifying all at once because I was sure I would be raptured—until, that is, those traumatic moments when it seemed my family was taken and I was left...*Home Alone* on a cosmic scale!

I won’t recount how that all unraveled except to say that fear-based religion has a shelf-life but divine love does not. The Light of perfect Love exposed the silliness and healed the trauma, thanks be to God. □

PARTIAL APOCALYPTIC GLOSSARY

Dispensationalism: A method of interpreting future events spoken of in the Bible. Most iterations of dispensational theology believe human history will last 6,000 years followed by a 1,000-year millennial earthly rule of Christ.

End-Times: Believed to be the last generation on earth before the Second Coming of Jesus. Dispensationalism has produced many such

end-time generations since 1843, which was one of the first dispensationalist-inspired predictions for the date of the Second Coming.

Rapture: The supposed event when those who are not Christians will see and hear the spectacle of Christians being whisked away to safety in heaven while they are left behind.

Tribulation: A biblical term interpreted by dispensationalists as referring to seven years of unparalleled trouble shortly before the Second Coming.

FEAR NOT!

Irene Frances

FEAR TAKES MANY forms and for me, it has often been with me when I set out in the car. Why? Whether it is to Christian events such as an inter-church meeting on the Sunshine Coast eight years ago, or non-church outings such as driving up the Toowoomba Range, going to and from Charleville, to Karana Downs and Ipswich, Manly, Highgate Hill, Norman Park or Brisbane's Northside—always, always fear and anxiety abound. Why?

Fear—of breaking down, in particular—even when my car was brand new! Fear now, with the slight “hiccup” when I move from 80 to 90kph—but which has caused no other problems, and which so seldom happens. Why fear?

Is this a hangover from when I was married and never drove when my husband was in the car because I felt inadequate compared to him? Is it because I don't think I can look after myself on the road? To call the RACQ [Royal Automobile Club of Queensland] if I need them? To trust my car that I have kept well serviced?

Is this telling me I am afraid of being alone—a woman on my own—when the reality is I am not alone and I know God is always with me? Why am I afraid of driving? On two occasions when I have had significant issues with the car—once when it needed a new gearbox and I was a long way from my home in Charleville, and another time when I had two flat tires, again a long way from home—I managed the situations with ease, called RACQ and was able to have both issues attended to quickly with no added hassles. Because the problems happened where I could access a mechanic they were attended to before I had to get back on the road for the long drive home.

I had never thought about this fear until recently when I was about to set out for the Sunshine Coast and felt yet again fear take over. I was looking forward to my time away, and I did not want my



journey to be spoiled by fear. Enough was enough.

We're encouraged to face our fears, and as I did—very definitely questioning what was going on and why—they suddenly dissipated. I was rid of them. I knew that I was a competent driver and that if needed the RACQ would be there to help along the way. In particular, I reminded myself that wherever I may be, on the road or at home, my awesome God is with me watching over me and protecting me.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah repeatedly encourages us not to fear—at last I'm taking notice:

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...”
(Isaiah 35:4).

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you” (Isaiah 41:14).

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

I had the smoothest drive to the Sunshine Coast and arrived safely without getting lost, something of a miracle for me—I have often wound up in the weirdest places when my lack of navigation skills and inability to read a map have led me astray. But that's another story. □

Irene Frances contributes articles from Australia. She runs a blog called “Authentic Christian Living” at www.irenefrances.wordpress.com

Did Jesus Die for All?

Jim Fowler

(cont'd from page 7)

indicates *the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, gave Himself a ransom (redemptive payment of deliverance) for ALL* (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

Through His own blood, He entered the Holy Place once for ALL, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12) for all human beings.

their assets from harm or loss. They want some sense of certainty of safety and safe-keeping.

This natural tendency of mankind to desire some sense of certainty or guarantee of protection for what they consider valuable carries over from the physical and social realms into the metaphysical realm of seeking some sense of eternal security, for spiritual safe-keeping beyond this life. But eternal life is not an asset that we possess and can make

moment. God did not offer us an “Eternal Security Insurance and Assurance Policy.” The only thing he offered us was himself, in the person of his Son, and by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Our security is in the living dynamic of the divine presence and function of Jesus.

Our security is not in formulaic religious procedures, not in logical promises of guaranteed certainty, not in a contractual plan whereby we can bank on (conjure up trust in) the faithfulness of God and not



Our security is in the living dynamic of the divine presence and function of Jesus.

It appears to me that the scriptural evidence is sufficient to conclude that Jesus did indeed die for ALL human beings.

OUR SEARCH FOR SECURITY

Human beings have always sought to preserve the status-quo of what they have, by protecting

arrangements to securely protect. Eternal life is a Person, Jesus Christ.

So, eternal life cannot be secured in contractual plans of insurance and assurance, but only in the dynamic and continuous receptivity of deriving relationally from Jesus Christ moment by

in a theological system of permanence. Our security is in a continuous relational connection of intimacy with the living Lord Jesus. □

Jim Fowler is the author of several theological works, including his classic, The Issue is Jesus.



CWR_m
GREG ALBRECHT

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Is the Bible infallible?

QUESTION: I am fairly new to your ministry. I'm pleased with what I see, but you seem to make disparaging remarks about the Bible's infallibility—you seem to devalue it. That concerns me.

Can you help me have a better perception of the Bible?

RESPONSE: We believe the Bible to be profitable for teaching, instruction, encouragement and inspiration. We believe the Bible is inspired of God, so we certainly don't "devalue" it but we do "devalue" false assertions about it, such as the idea that the Bible itself is infallible.

The Bible, some say, is the Word of God. That is a false supposition, according to the Bible. Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-14). ***Jesus is the Word of God.*** He alone occupies the throne of authority. He does not share his throne with a book.

Bible publishers have long titled the Bible as "holy." God alone is holy. God alone is infallible and inerrant. Humans are created, mortal and less than perfect—all that we touch and produce falls short of perfection and holiness.

Humans have determined the Bible to be holy, infallible and inerrant. Neither God nor the Bible makes any such claim.

We believe in the Old

Testament just as we do the New Testament. Most of all, we believe that all biblical passages, teachings, and accounts, properly understood, should be interpreted in light of the birth, life, teachings, cross and resurrection of Jesus. The entire Bible is relevant and significant as it is read and understood through a Christ-centered filter.

Not every passage in the Bible holds equal importance. The parables of Jesus should be given greater weight than an Old Testament genealogy. The Sermon on the Mount is of greater import to Christians than the law given on Mt. Sinai. The epistles of the New Testament explain and interpret the Old Testament prophets, not the other way around.

The Bible is an unfolding revelation of God, so when we read Old Testament accounts that God directed the genocide of a city-state—including the murder of all men, women, children and animals—we balance the claim that God directed such actions against the final authority of Christ as the Word of God. We interpret the Old Testament in the light of the ultimate revelation of God as love, rather than the other way around, for the God we read about in the New Testament, incarnate in Jesus, is not an angry, vengeful, murderous God.

We understand the Bible in light of its historical milieu and

literary genres. Some of the Bible was written before Jesus, some after Jesus. Some parts were written within the boundaries and purview of the old covenant—others within the perspective of the new covenant.

When we read a newspaper, we intuitively allow for many genres. The front page is different from the sports page. Classified ads are written in a different style than the comics or an editorial opinion.

So too, the Psalms are not the same as the book of Galatians. Deuteronomy is different than Isaiah's prophecies, just as Matthew is different than the book of Revelation.

The Bible is also filled with symbols, metaphors, wise sayings and parables that, if read literally, rob those teachings of their deep and profound meaning. And the Bible must be understood in context—reading a text out of its context results in pretexts and proof-texts that torture the meaning of the Scriptures (Scrip-torture, if you will) with the beliefs of those who torture it.

Thus, many read the Bible in order to discover what they already believe to be true and reinforce their religious faith. In so doing, they abuse the Bible to serve their own interests.

You can read more articles about the Bible on the free resources page on our website—www.ptm.org. □

Come join Greg Albrecht, the voice of **CWR audio**—we're all about Jesus, all the time!
Below is our schedule of weekly CWR audio sermons for the next two months.

April 2020

The King of a Rather Strange Kingdom

– Week of April 5

Death Swallowed Up

– Week of April 12

"We Had Hoped..."

– Week of April 19

Proof Text Alert!

– Week of April 26

TUNE IN AT [www.ptm.org/
cwr-teaching-ministry](http://www.ptm.org/cwr-teaching-ministry)

May 2020

The Narrow Door

– Week of May 3

Forever and Ever, A-men

– Week of May 10

Grace is Senseless, Irrational & Absurd

– Week of May 17

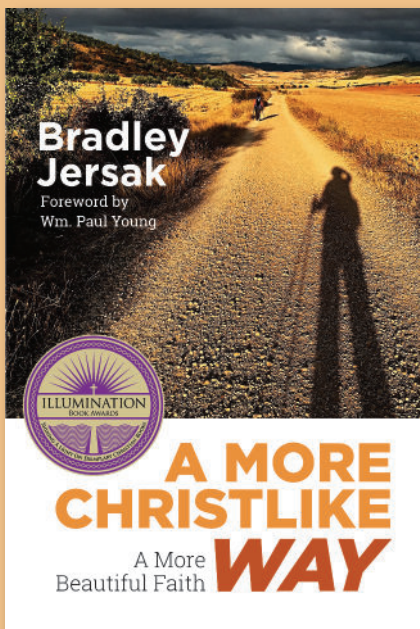
Is That All There Is?

– Week of May 24

Running With the Wind

– Week of May 31

Breaking News! CWR Press and Brad Jersak Receive Second Gold Medal!



A More Christlike Way: A More Beautiful Faith

In 2016, *A More Christlike God*, by Brad Jersak, published by CWRpress (2015), received the Enduring Light Gold Medal at the Illumination Book Awards.

Now Brad's new book, *A More Christlike Way* (CWRpress, 2019), was also awarded the Illumination Book Awards' 2020 Enduring Light Gold Medal.

Dr. Jersak's *A More Christlike God* has been published in three languages so far, with enthusiastic readers all over the world hailing it as a lifechanging work. *A More Christlike Way*, the highly anticipated follow-up to *A More Christlike God*, is already receiving high praise and it promises to impact the lives of readers in a similar way. Students and seekers of Jesus will be thrilled with the transforming insights in both of these Gold Medal Award winning books.

**Print versions available at
Amazon & PTM.org/books**