

Last of All...ME!

(from front page)

Christ in quite unflattering terms. From Paul's various writings it is clear that he certainly carried the heavy memory of all the damage he had done and deaths he helped to bring about.

There are many lessons to learn from Paul's "late birth, seen in 1 Cor. 15!"

1) **Last** is not necessarily *worst!* In 1 Cor. 15 (see front page) and in other of Paul's writing, we see that he had reason to keep his head up...and the *greatest* reason was the grace of God!

2) Paul coming "**last of all**" did not mean he came by some new way that either he or some other had invented. Certainly, the Bible speaks of "*the new and living way*," (Heb. 10: 20), and Saul of Tarsus entered into the kingdom of God that Way. However, that "*new and living way*" was based on solid, God-given Old Testament prophecies, "*according to the Scriptures*," as Paul repeats in 1 Cor. 15: 3, 4.

3) Paul was not spreading second-hand religion received from man, culture or any other merely earthly source. He said "**Last of all...ME!**" Thank God for the testimony of *others*, but it can never substitute for your own personal experience.

4) The fact that Paul had "seen" Christ is not the main criteria, for many people "saw" Jesus, yet ignored, mocked, hated and finally crucified Him.

5) Paul's words do not indicate an inferiority complex or depression. True humility is at the heart of holiness, but beware of Satan's counterfeit humility!

6) Sin disqualifies all of us, until God's grace through Christ enters. In 1 Cor. 15:9, Paul said "*I am not worthy...BECAUSE!*"

Every one of us has at least one "*because*."

7) "Resurrection labour" is the *proof* of true spiritual life, as well as the *sustaining* of it. Paul said "*I laboured!*"

8) True Resurrection witness is the work of God and man together. Paul said "*I laboured...yet not I!*"

9) God's grace can be resisted, but Paul quit resisting. The man to whom Jesus said "*It is hard for you to kick against the goads*" (Acts 26:14; 9:5) later said "*His grace toward me was not in vain!*" A song says, "He stood at my heart's door 'mid sunshine and rain; and patiently waited an entrance to gain. What shame that so long He entreated in vain, for He is so precious to me!"

10) The end result in Resurrection Life in the believer is the glory of God by the salvation of others. There in v.15, Paul says, "*Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*"

The above 10 points should guide and encourage you to come to Jesus Christ, the Saviour and allow Him to save you and *use* you, to forgive your sins then cleanse and fill your heart, and keep you going until He comes!

The *serious* side of this glorious truth of **Last of All** is that it *must last!* Yes, Paul said "*so we preach and so you believed*," but he also said in 1 Cor. 9:27 "*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified* [i.e. rejected, not having God's approval]." Jacob's brother, Esau, was rejected (Heb. 12:17), and serves as one example among many. See the seriousness of this, *yet do not despair!*

There's room at the Cross for you.

There's room at the Cross for you.

Though millions have come,

there's still room for one!

Yes there's room at the Cross for you!

(BEST BUSINESS from front) He is near (Isa. 55:6). Leaving Jericho, Jesus told the story of people given various amounts of money, & told "Occupy till I come!" That meant "**DO MY BUSINESS** until I come, & trade with *these* (which were given to them) in the process!" Jesus gave that story, then showed what **HE** *always* considered **THE BEST BUSINESS**...i.e. doing God's will & work, glorifying God in the spiritual rescue & salvation of people! Jesus gave that parable on His way from Jericho to Jerusalem...& the Cross! In that parable, "*the citizens hated him & said, 'We will not have this man to rule over us!'*" That attitude is how most people *really* treat Jesus. Denying the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection & Pentecost & neglecting soul-saving effort is to avoid & reject God's Business.

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The

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LAST OF ALL... ME!



Gabriel Mancino

The dear elderly black lady...now blind...squealed out in recognition, "Youz da baby udda famly!" The Sanders lived next to my grandfather, up the road from my parents. Mrs. Sanders knew our large family and that I was the last of them; "**da baby**," as she called me! Fond memories!

In late April we remembered Jesus' **crucifixion and resurrection**, while on June 2, His **Ascension** back to the Father. June 12 was "**Pentecost Sunday**." (See short article inside).

Some argue whether or not St. Paul saw Jesus on earth prior to his "**Damascus Road Experience**" (DRE). His DRE was actually not one of Christ's various resurrection appearances to followers, but a **Post-Ascension appearance!** Saul (later named Paul) was obviously in and

around Jerusalem during his youth, according to Acts 26: 4,5,9,10, so it is possible that he saw Jesus. *Whatever!*

In what is called "The Resurrection Chapter," i.e. 1 Cor. 15, Paul lists some who saw Christ after the resurrection, then ends the list saying, "**Then last of all He was seen by me also**, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (v.8-11).

Paul said he was like "**one born out of due time**." That literally means like an aborted baby, or perhaps a weak baby prematurely born. Some say that Paul may have had a crooked-back, or poor eyesight, that he was short and that his voice was unpleasant. Is this "weakness?"

It is an irony that Paul's "**new birth**" came "**late**" compared to the 12 and others, yet he refers to his coming to

(continued on back page)

THE BEST BUSINESS OF ALL! Jesus told the great parable story, *The Good Samaritan*, with a drama happening on the road to Jericho. Jesus may have gone to Jericho only once. On the way **IN & OUT** of the town, the blind beggars were healed and saved, & Zacchaeus, a short, rich tax collector, was saved! Jesus showed that **THE LAST** & even **THE LEAST** can find Christ and salvation. Zacchaeus was hated & was too short to see Jesus over the crowd, but climbed a tree to overcome the obstacle. The blind men were told to shut up, but called to Jesus all the more! Jericho was a one-off, but they didn't know it. No wonder the Bible says "**Seek the Lord WHILE He can be found; call upon Him WHILE**

(Continued on back)

God's Finger

Gabriel L. Mancino



Michelangelo's painting of God creating man may have "inspired" E.T.'s similar scene. "Parallels" have been drawn between the life of Christ and that movie. But Peter declares that the disciples "did not follow cleverly invented fables when they made known to us the power and coming of Jesus. They were eyewitnesses" (2 Pet. 1:16). Counterfeits imply the existence of a genuine and desired item, for no one counterfeits junk. Also, it's difficult to copy something that doesn't exist.

The Bible figuratively speaks of God's hands, arms, feet, eyes, and refers to God as a tower, a refuge, a consuming fire, etc. These God-inspired metaphors simply clarify, praise and worship God in His dealings with man. In the Bible book, "Esther," the name of God is not found. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said that though God's name is not found there, His finger is! God worked silently, keeping His Plan and Purpose on track.

God is certainly distinct from and separate from His creation. God made the world, but the world is not God. But the moment Man sinned, God was out looking for him! God's rescue Plan was in blueprint before either Adam or the world was made. Ages before audio-books, God put His Word-Plan into action, "and the Word became flesh and lived for a while among us!"

God's eternal, "Rescue-Man Plan" involved "puzzle-pieces" that were as unique as they were perfect. The Ultimate "Piece" was Christ's entrance into this world. That is called the Incarnation; literally "in-fleshment." God Himself came to us. Jesus, quoting the Old Testament, said "the stone that the builders rejected, became the head of the corner" (Matt. 21:42; Ps. 118:22). Peter later quoted it, as well (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7).

"By faith" I accept that God always existed uncreated, and that He spoke the universe into existence—out of nothing. I also accept the Incarnation on even "better grounds!" While God's existence and the manner of God's creating the universe were

not told in advance, the Incarnation was! My brain cannot "comprehend" any of it, but my heart believes it all.

Some say that God ignores the sins of Jewish people. Believe me, God severely punished Israel on many occasions. "The Judge of all the earth does right..." with us all! (Gen. 18:25). The Greatest News is that God put MORE than His finger into this world's scene. Jesus' opponents once claimed He was working by Satan's power. He replied, "if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk. 11:20).

We read of one occasion when Jesus is said to have used His finger (Jn 8:6). What a scene of hypocrisy and hatred by His enemies! But it was also a place of immeasurable forgiveness, to a woman... much like the one in Jn 4. In neither case did Jesus "gloss over" sin, yet He set both prisoners "free indeed!" In Jn 8, Jesus' finger was also the tool to convict the conscience of the hypocritical accusers. That was a mercy to them, as well!

When God puts His finger on a person's sin, it is time for him or her to let God take that sin completely away, and make them a new person in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). Michelangelo painted man's creation. Jesus came for man's re-creation!

Such truth about God, Christ and God's singular Plan for man's salvation is met with fierce resistance. The Old and New Testaments record past opposition. God is recording the present edition right now.

Some of Jesus' Jewish opponents often tried to trap Him with questions, "logic" and hypothetical stories. I should say hypocritical stories, for they had no intention of loving Jesus, accepting His claims, or obeying His words. Obeying is the acid-test of true fellowship with Him, for He said, "IF you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn.14:15).

Many times Jesus' opponents built their arguments on faulty foundations like those to whom He said, "Your mistake is due to your not knowing the Word of God nor the power of God!" (Matt. 22:29). Such folk often try to force a "logical conclusion" to their earthly examples. Earthly illustrations easily "break down," especially as examples of God and His working among man. This is particularly true when the

God's Finger (from left page)

earthly illustrations come from hearts and minds that have been pre-conditioned to an opposing agenda. Jesus used earthly illustrations with flawless perfection, while so many others reject the Incarnate Christ and think they are doing God's service (Jn. 16: 2; Acts 26: 9-11).

Craftiness and deceit today, is just as it was in Jesus' day. The Lord welcomes "honest doubt," but if questions are just a cover for dishonest sin, rejection and rebellion, THAT is a far different matter!

Man's native, inborn resistance to God is illustrated in the Bible by the Jews, as well as by their enemies! This is why Rom. 1-3 (see 3:9) says that BOTH stand guilty, without excuse, and facing certain damnation, unless they truly repent and get to God. BOTH are referred to by Nehemiah, who led the rebuilding of Jerusalem after Babylon had destroyed it. In Neh. 9 he tells the story of the Egyptian king's stubborn pride and rebellion against God in Moses' day. The king hard-heartedly fought God's judgments, but his helpers admitted "This is the finger of God!" Nehemiah then tells of that same evil pride and rebellion within the people of Israel in the time following! But God is fair and faithful, judging sin wherever and in whoever it is found. That same equality is also "poured out" in God's supreme demonstration of His love, because Jesus died for ALL!

Yet, God "puts the ball in our court. He has to! Of necessity, the focus changes from the finger of God and the finger of Jesus to Man's finger! From God's standpoint the Incarnation was sufficient. But upon Christ's death and resurrection, Jesus demanded of "Doubting Thomas," "Reach out your finger! Reach out your hand!" — (Jn. 20:27). Every man must do the part that God requires of him. It is "reaching out the finger" of obedience and faith.

A. B. Simpson's song declares:

"Oh, how sweet the glorious message simple faith may claim: Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same! — He who pardoned erring Peter, You never need to fear; He that came to faithless Thomas all your doubts will clear."

Reach out your finger of faith today!

"Even As I... & Greater!"

Gabriel L. Mancino



Pentecost Sunday (June 12) commemorates the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Jesus said that God's Spirit outpoured upon already-saved believers was "the Promise of the Father." THIS is "the Comforter" spoken of by Jesus, for He Himself says so, and so do the disciples. The religious crowd resisted God's Spirit then, before then, and do today, as Stephen declared before he was killed (Acts 7:51).

Like many other aspects of Jesus' life and teaching, He lifted LOVE into crystal-clear, almost-tangible clarity by adding the words "even as I!" Love, then, became the standard of Christ's followers, only as they loved as He loved.

Peter adds more to sharpen the focus saying "He is our Example, that we should follow in His steps, WHO DID NO SIN..." (1 Pet. 2: 21, 22). Wow, the first detail Peter gave to clarify our "Example" was Christ's holiness. Perfect! Why "perfect?" I say perfect because in Jesus' longest, and intensely-specific prayer in John 17, He prayed that His already-converted disciples would suddenly... in a moment... receive from God, the needed, but missing "element" that would address their singularly-critical deficiency. For the disciples, who Jesus said were "not of the world even as I am not of the world" (14, 16), Jesus prayed "Sanctify them!" (17). Sanctify means make pure, but the original verb indicates a sudden, not continuous action. Surely, they were to keep holy and pure, but this prayer and its fulfillment at Pentecost refer ONLY to that specific and sudden outpouring "Promise of the Father," "the Comforter," the Holy Ghost.

Before Jesus ascended, He told His disciples to "wait for the Promise of the Father, which you have heard of from Me." And there IS a vital connection between Christ's ascension to the Father, and Christ's reminding them of "the Promised Gift of the Holy Ghost, not many days from now," (Acts 1:5). You see, Jesus had told them, just before that great prayer (Jn 17, above) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (Jn. 14:12). By the way, "The Promised Comforter" came 10 days (not 600 years!) later, so it was not Mohammed.

Only, Only, Only PENTECOST Brings "Even As I...And Greater!"

We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.