

Rom. 14:19  
So then let us  
follow after  
things which  
make for  
peace, and  
things  
whereby we  
may edify one  
another.



John 8:32 And  
ye shall  
know the  
truth and  
the truth  
shall make  
you free.

July 8  
2018

## WHERE WERE WE BEFORE CHRIST?

Jim Stauffer

**Col. 1:21** *And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach —23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

### Observations:

He speaks here of the condition of the soul of each and every man. Alienation from God is the result of sin (**Isa. 59:1,2**). It is noteworthy that he refers to those alienated as being hostile in mind. This hostility in this context has to be directed toward the will of God. Furthermore, we should understand evil deeds to be labors in the interest of those things opposed to God. This does not mean we are evil in the sight of man, but rather our deeds are evil since they do not support and even on occasion oppose the plan of God.

Many today do not understand the position of the world and its interests as compared to God and His plan. John explains it clearly; **1John 2:15** *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. Cf. Gal. 5:16-21*

He then gives us reassurance by referencing the reconciliation that Christ provides for each and every one of us who was once alienated from God. The Scriptures teach us Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice for all men to be forgiven of their sins and made just before God (**Rom. 3:24-26**).

Our sins are washed away by His cleansing blood, when we are buried with Him in baptism (**1 Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 7:14; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4**). We then

are a new creature, reconciled to God by the access to redemption provided by the death of Christ. Here is how Paul described it to the Corinthians: **2 Cor. 5:14** *For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. ....17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

Finally, let us note that the apostle reminds us that once we have been redeemed it behooves us to remain faithful to the Lord until death. In this text he calls it faithfulness to the hope of the gospel. The hope of the gospel is heaven itself, eternity in the presence of the Lord. Paul teaches this hope when discussing the reality of the resurrection of the dead to face judgment in **1 Cor. 15**. This hope is based on the justification by faith that is received when we obey the instruction of the gospel and as mentioned earlier are cleansed by the blood of Christ (**Rom. 5:1,2**).

We write about these things to ensure we do not take comfort in such theories about heaven and hell as the world sets forth. The world sees no difference between the person who is immoral in many ways and the person who simply has been separated from God by his sin. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's expectations (**Rom. 3:23**). This sin separated us from God and our only hope is to be reconciled by the blood of Christ.

If you have not obeyed the instructions of the apostles in the gospel of Christ, your soul is in danger of eternal judgment regardless of what people in the world may tell you. Think about these things and if you wish to discuss them, feel free to give us a call.

## SALVATION COMES TO THOSE WHO FEAR GOD

*“Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land” (Psalm 85:9).* Most commentaries describe the eighty-fifth Psalm as one that belongs to the period after Babylonian captivity— Post-exilic. The Lord favored the land by bringing back His people; He restored them to Jerusalem, setting them once again on their journey as the faithful remnant through whom the Messiah would eventually come. God’s wrath was on fierce display, as Nebuchadnezzar marched into Palestine to cart off the best and brightest of Israel’s young princes. The razing of the temple (586BC) was the final, ultimate blow, crippling God’s people; their once proud monument to monotheism had given way to the pagan excesses of a licentious people. The Babylonians had no regard for Jehovah or for the symbols of worship that had been dedicated to Him (**Daniel 5**). But now, through God’s forgiveness, His people were home.

It is only appropriate that God’s people continue to cry out as they sought God’s continual grace and mercy. Yes, they had been forgiven. Yes, they had returned home. But a healthy remembrance of where they had been and what had caused their misfortune, would indelibly impress upon their hearts the constant need to seek, beg, and plead, and to give thanks for all that God is and for all He had done for them. If they were to continue to survive it would only be with God’s help. Such help they had conveniently forgotten, to their detriment and ruin. They now longed for the renewal of God’s love. They needed to listen to what He said. The true saints of God are those who refused to embrace their former folly.

Salvation comes to those who fear God. The salvation of the Lord is for all, at least, potentially. Yet, salvation does not come to all because not all will fear Him. Instead of fear, many persist in folly. Love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace combine to produce restoration. The ultimate end is God’s glory, not our well-being. Yes, we are nothing without Him. Yes, we identify with the “reward” aspect of serving God. But finally, it is all about God.

That seems to be the essential problem of faithfulness. In our perverted minds, we think it is about us. It is always about us. We get caught up in the splendor of our lives. Our successes, education, accolades, popularity, and busyness seem to be working for us. All is well. Yes, we want to enjoy the blessings of God, but only when we find it convenient to do so. Opportunities to study, worship, and serve are neglected, often with no compunction of conscience at all. It is only when our land and our blessings are threatened that we then turn to God. A sick child, a wayward spouse, a lost job— anything adverse will drive us to God. But it may be that we have neglected

God for such a long time, that we find ourselves in the land of Babylon; we don’t even know the way home.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## The Beginning Point of the Timeline

Having established (from the New Testament) the meaning of the six purposes of the 70 Weeks we now turn to the beginning point of the timeline for the Prophecy. Gabriel said to Daniel, *“Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem”*. God, in effect, was saying, “Start counting when you see this specific decree given.” It would be odd indeed if the beginning point for such a momentous prophecy, such as this clearly is, would not be noticed in the Scriptures themselves. Do we have such a decree? Well, yes, actually, we do!

In **Isaiah 44:28 to 45:6** the prophet names a shepherd of Israel who orders the city of Jerusalem to be built, Cyrus. This came to pass in **2 Chronicles 36:22f and Ezra 1**. Isaiah lived almost 200 years before Cyrus came to power and issued his decree. God called him by name at least 170 years before the prophecy was fulfilled and the decree he issued matched the decree to be understood by Daniel to a “TEE”. This decree was given at the same time that Daniel received the prophecy, the first year of Darius who was co-regent with Cyrus the Great. It would be a massive incoherence if this were NOT the decree intended by the prophecy of The Seventy Weeks.

There is a problem we must deal with, though, for this decree does not fit into the secular timelines for the events described in the prophecy. Cyrus came to power in 536BC and Jesus was baptized about 24AD, a 77 year difference from the prophecy. As honest folks we must not hide from this fact! Embrace the difficulty! It actually proves the divine origin of Daniel. We’ll look at this next week.

**Cleveland Reddinger**

## Breaking Bread and Breaking Down Barriers

**Shane Scott**

A couple of weeks ago, while traveling for a speaking engagement in Brentwood, Tennessee, I had a remarkable experience that I would like to share. My flight from Tampa was very early, so when I arrived in Nashville, I was ready for breakfast. A short distance from the Nashville airport there is a fantastic place to eat called Monnell’s at the Manor. It is one of several

Monnell's locations in town. Monnell's offers classic southern cooking served family-style. That means that when you walk in, there are large tables that seat 12-16 people, and you may share your meal with several complete strangers. The food is brought out by the bowl and platter, and you just start passing everything around (to the left!) until everyone is served. The staff keeps bringing the food out as long as you want to keep eating. Needless to say, it's one of my favorite places to eat!

By the time I got there, it was right at 9 am. Most of the morning breakfast customers had already finished and left, so I was taken to a table and seated by myself. But after a few minutes, a large group of black customers walked in and were seated at the table with me. Over the course of the meal, I learned that my breakfast companions were a father, wife, daughter, sister-in-law, and older family friend. They had come down from Clarksville to Nashville and knew where the food was good!

On paper, we did not have a lot in common at first glance. But when they began to eat, one of the ladies gave thanks. So at that point, I knew that we shared certain beliefs, and we could "speak the same language." As we passed around the biscuits, peach preserves, fried chicken (a breakfast delicacy!), eggs, grits, country ham, and – well, I could keep going! – we began to learn more about each other.

Food is a great leveler. Although our backgrounds were very different in many ways, it was clear that we all grew up eating the same kind of cooking. What one culture may call "soul food," I call "Granny's cooking." That's why we were all at the same place, enjoying the same meal.

Fellowship around a table is significant in our culture, but in Jesus' day, it was taken even more seriously. That's why his deliberate choice to share meals with the outcasts of his society triggered such strong condemnation from the Pharisees: *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."* (Luke 15:1-2)

And when Peter shared the gospel with Cornelius and his family, what really upset the traditionalists was that Peter *"went to uncircumcised men and ate with them"* (Acts 11:3).

As we talked, one of my breakfast companions asked if I was from Nashville. I explained that I used to live in Nashville, but that I now lived in the Tampa area and was in town for work. They asked me what I did, and I explained that I was a preacher. This immediately led to a series of questions about the Bible, usually prefaced by, "Hey, Preacher..." We had a blast!

At one point, the older gentleman asked me why race relations seemed to be getting worse rather than better. It is a testimony to the comfort level we all felt at that table that he would ask me for my thoughts about that

topic. I prefaced my response by acknowledging to him that he had experienced things in his life that I would never really fully understand. After all, a few years before I was born, he would not have been permitted to eat in a public restaurant in Nashville.

But he asked, and I answered. I explained my views (that had recently been part of a sermon I preached here at home) that Christianity brought together people from many racial, ethnic, and social strata, and that as Christianity declines in our culture, people will default back to those superficial but powerful bonds of identity. I also suggested that some politicians in both parties have decided that it is to their advantage to keep people from these different demographics at odds with each other, and that many people have more in common than they think. I described what life was like for my grandparents, hillbillies from eastern Kentucky (and in case you don't know, I use the term "hillbilly" with pride, not derision!) who lived at the edge of where the "white part" of town ended and the "black part" of town started. We joked that the color that matters most is *green* – money – and lots of people from my background and theirs didn't have very much a generation ago.

As we were talking, it occurred to me that another ironic aspect of this conversation was that for many generations, black and white Christians did not worship together in the south. There were "black churches" and "white churches." In some places, this is still the case. And while it is easy for me to criticize people who lived in a different time than my own, it is very difficult for me to understand how this kind of racial segregation is consistent with the gospel. *You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.* (Colossians 3:9-11)

Where would race relations in the country be – especially in the south – if people who had so much in common had chosen to defy the prejudices of the world and share time together around the Lord's table, where *"we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread"* (1 Corinthians 10:17)?

As we were finishing up our meal together, we came to two conclusions. First, America would be a nicer place if everyone had to eat at Monnell's! But second, and far more importantly, the gospel is the only real solution to the problem of race relations.

On the way out, one of the ladies at the table grabbed my ticket and paid for my meal. She just said for me to pass it on to someone else. And then, as we walked out together, she grabbed the older gentleman and insisted that we get a picture together.

**Taken from focus [magazine.com](http://magazine.com)**

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study  
Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship  
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship  
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

### Visitors welcome

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders: Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer**

**Deacons:**

**Bill Miller**

**Brandon Jimison**

**Casey Dent**

**Joe Hurd**

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[lenexachurchofchrist.org](http://lenexachurchofchrist.org)

### NEWS AND NOTES:

#### PRAYER LIST:

PLEASE REMEMBER JAN PATRICK,  
STEPHEN KIMKER, STEVE AND  
SUZANNE WIMP, ALMA  
BAUMGARTNER'S MOTHER AND  
GEORGE ROOT.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS -  
FOLLOWING THE MESSIAH  
RON PECK

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE  
CLASS - THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS  
GOVERNMENT  
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON:  
WHO ARE WE?



## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10