

# Bread & Wine



**AUGUST 2007**

## BREAD & WINE

**BREAD & WINE** is a monthly publication by Bethel Community Church of Sarasota, Florida, USA.

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**Subscriptions:**  
Bread & Wine is available free of charge at the church.

**Rates:** \$12:00 per year. All payments should be made to Bethel Community Church.

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**Cover Picture:** The Parthenon in Athens where the wisdom of men was proclaimed, and where in reality the folly of man was revealed. (Proverbs 8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:18 – 30)

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## **Editorial**

*Russ Atmore*

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The Puritans often stressed how important it was to be near Christ. They spent their lives examining Scripture and applying Scripture to every area of their lives, because they were concerned about they were living. Indeed, the Bible points out this need to us.

The first area to be concerned about is whether I am truly believing in the Lord Jesus and on the Lord Jesus for my salvation? Conversion is necessary for eternal life and this conversion is something God does in us. There is the great need then to live a godly life, to be sensitive to sin, to hate evil, and to love Christ. Everything we do must be for the Glory of God, and this aim must dominate our lives until Jesus returns or we die and go t o Him.

The Christian life is a life of worship and God has given us guidelines about how to worship. We live in the midst of culture wars and worship wars, and so it is imperative that we understand what God desires of His people as they gather together. It is not the public square that determines these things, but God's Word.

Our society is increasingly, it would seem, tending away from God and heading for collapse. This happens when we abandon our moral responsibilities. The first moral responsibility we all have is to be obedient to God. Godliness and holiness are the products of obedience. God desires that His people be holy as He is holy.

In our commentary on Mark, we consider in some detail the sin that can never be forgiven. This should be of interest to all believers because the ramifications are to startling to ignore. As usual, our quiz section turns on the heat, something we don't want in these hot sweltering days, so find a nice cool place and turn your minds and hearts to the things of God

*Soli Deo Gloria*

## **Gaining Heaven (or True Conversion)**

*Russ Atmore*

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Getting to heaven is easier said than done. Contrary to the foolish notions propounded today by personal workers and evangelists that heaven is easily gained (you just simply believe and all will be well) the road to heaven is described by our Lord Jesus as narrow and the occupants on that road are actually few in number (Matt 7:13) and that the door to enter through is also narrow (Luke 13:24). Many will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the door is shut by the Master Himself, no man can enter, though he may demand access. They can stand outside and knock, but He shall not let them in. The parable of the five foolish virgins and the five wise virgins in Matthew 25 stresses the seriousness of the right view of heaven and having a right attitude in being prepared for the coming of the Lord.

There is no entering heaven apart from the second birth. It is through the new birth of being born again (lit. born from above) that holiness in principle is granted to us. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to every believer, and it is this righteousness which guarantees my final destiny as heaven. To become a Christian means that I have looked outside of myself to another who is altogether righteousness and lovely, namely, the Lord Jesus. Without holiness both in principle and in practice no man, woman, boy or girl shall ever see the glories of heaven (Heb. 12:14). Establish Christ in your hearts and minds as your Savior and Lord.

There are many who cherish the hopes of mercy and heaven, but they continue as they were before conversion. They need to be converted otherwise they shall perish. There are those who imagine themselves in a converted state, yet are strangers to grace and to God. They are unconverted. There are those who feel no alarm, no terror, they fear nothing regarding the future terrors of the Lord. They are unconverted. There are those who do not know the way, and so they should be entreated to be saved, otherwise they too, shall perish.

Conversion is not merely taking to yourself the profession of Christianity. Christianity is more than just a name. There are those who name the name of Christ but do not depart from the way of iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19), and there are those who say they know God, but deny Him by their works (Titus 1:16). God will not receive those who say they are converts when in reality they have not turned from their secret sins, but rather have cherished them and coddled them deep in the recesses of their heart. And when they have made confession to the Lord they have merely spoken peace to themselves, as the psychologist and psychiatrist or therapist would have you do. They have left a secret way back to their sins within their hearts, and when they so desire they return to their sins. All such will perish as unconverted.

Conversion does not lie in moral righteousness. Paul could say before his conversion that as regarding righteousness he was blameless (Phil. 3:6). You must have more than moral righteousness to gain entry to God's Kingdom. Conversion is not a superficial change or partial reforming of life. Conversion is not having a Bible education mistaken for grace itself. True conversion is characterized by a turning from sin. The converted man or woman is continually at enmity with sin. It is the deadliest of all enemies. He is especially at war with his own sins, and particularly his darling sin. Sin has become for the believer the object of his indignation. He is intensely sorrowful because of His sins. He is wounded by them! He groans and struggles under them.

If God were to give him the choice of any enemy he would without hesitation choose any enemy or affliction except his sin. Before his conversion he had light thoughts about sin if any. He cherished his sins, he loved them, they brought him satisfaction and delight. He clung to his sins like a little girl will not be parted from her favorite doll. When a man or woman becomes a Christian they are terrified at the danger of sin and they are convinced of the defilement of sin. The true convert loathes himself and hates himself because of his sins. He runs to Jesus for cleansing, and throws himself on that unceasing fountain of blood shed for sinners. If he sins he is anxious to return with all possible haste to that fountain again, and to receive that precious cleansing.

The true Christian will never yield the cause to sin. He will make no peace and never lay down his weapons against his sins. Have you crucified your affections and lusts? Have you not only confessed your sins, but forsaken them as well? If not you are unconverted. What about your unbridled tongue, your indulgence of your appetite, your neglect of prayer, of reading the Word, of hearing the Word? They will witness against you at the judgment. Be warned every man!

Conversion means we turn from Satan. Satan will offer you everything you desire to keep you from Christ. The converted person will wage war with the devil. He will be suspicious of every plot. He will keep his eye on the enemy of his soul. He will be afraid lest the evil one get a foothold in his life. Conversion is a turning from the world. Before a person is a Christian they are overcome by the world. He loves his money and his business. He loves his reputation. He loves his pleasure. Instead of giving to God what is due God, he keeps it for himself and relishes it.

Sin has made men miserable monsters that lavishly follow their own lusts. Conversion changes all this. God is placed on His throne. All credit is once again returned to the Lord. It is God on His throne, the world His footstool, Christ in your heart and the world under your feet. Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." You pretend to be in Christ if your friends are from the world. If your dearest friends are unconverted you pretend to belong to Jesus. Beware of this you who profess to belong to Christ. The believer has died to the world and its affections. Do you find yourself comfortable with worldly delights, worldly music, worldly affections, and worldly behavior? Beware lest you perish from off the face of this world!

True conversion is a turning from my own righteousness. Before salvation comes to a man or woman or child, they are content to cover themselves with their covering before God. They are content with their own works – they go to church but are irregular and unfaithful to the body of Christ. They are happy to be seen by others as having fulfilled the bare necessity. Ask them to get involved in the activities of the church. Ask them to be faithful at every church meeting. Ask them to love the brothers and sisters. They will offer the barest minimum of what is required but no more. Is this love to Christ? Is this love for the saints? Is this what a converted soul offers to God as part of his or her sacrifice of praise? The unconverted man or woman is inward turned. They care for themselves. Church activities are a burden for they are not done with love in the heart but rather as perfunctory duties. Beware if this is your relationship to the church. It will avail you nothing.

True conversion is manifested by true love for Christ. He is sweet to the taste. He is precious above all things. Unless a man or woman cherish Christ, they will find their delights elsewhere. Whenever Jesus is mentioned they will be embarrassed and turn away from such conversation. They will not know what to say for they are strangers to Jesus. Have you laid hold of God for your happiness both in this life and for the world to come? Where does your heart truly lie? You cannot have half a Christ. The unbeliever will have Jesus for salvation, but not for sanctification. He wants the privileges but not the Person. True conversion appropriates a whole Christ, and takes Him for a full portion and delight. Your soul depends on what you do with Jesus! What have you done with God's Son? Are you truly born from above? Is heaven truly your final home?

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*“True conversion gives a man security, but it does not allow him to leave off being watchful.”*

*C H Spurgeon*

## **The Coming of Christ**

*Russ Atmore*

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There are a plethora of opinions on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ centering primarily on the timing of the event. Confusion abounds among evangelical Christians over terminology and definition. There are Amillennialists, Postmillennialists and Premillennialists, and within the premillennialists' camp, you would either be a pretribulationist, mid-tribulationist or post-tribulationist. Within post-tribulationism you would find classic, semi-classic, futurist and dispensational interpretation, and within pretribulationism you would either be historical, covenantal or dispensational. It is easy to see why Christians either ignore the subject of eschatology (last things), or are not prepared to engage the issues. If you find these terms confusing, it is encouraging to know that they become easier with usage, however, to remain neutral over the coming of Jesus is not possible. It cannot be ignored because the Bible spends so much time developing the doctrine and provides theological reasons for our faith. One point is common to all the above positions – Jesus is coming again (emphasis mine). It is not a matter of when but rather a matter of how am I living should Christ come now?

There have been numerous attempts to set a date to the return of our Lord. Such attempts are foolhardy and unbiblical, for the simple reason that “no man knows about that day or hour” when the Lord may return (Matt. 24:36). It is also clear that for many, the coming of Jesus will not be expected or conducive to their way of life (Matt. 24:44). In view of the uncertainty over time or date, and over possible unchristian lifestyle, is it not

important for us to pay attention to what God has to say on this issue? Since we do not know when Jesus will come again, we should conduct our lives in the light of this knowledge. Expectancy should influence our behavior. Expectancy should wake us up from our slumber. Jesus said that we are to “keep watch, because we do not know the day or hour” (Matt. 25:13). Keeping watch is tantamount to setting a guard on duty, who must not fall asleep (in case the Lord comes). Keeping watch is to be real. It should affect our spiritual lives. Keeping watch means preparation (Matt. 25:1-13). The Bible is clear that there will be those who say they are Christians, but when the Lord comes, they will not be prepared for His coming. They will not be prepared spiritually. They will have spent their lives watching the wrong things (magazines, stocks, business, television, sport, themselves – whatever!!).

We should study the Scriptures to find out about Jesus coming again. We must, at least comprehend the basic issues that surround the return of Jesus. There are too many ignorant Christians today which points to the very real danger that they may not be Christians at all, since spiritual growth and fruit is evidence of regeneration. Many Christians are worried about their own problems, and probably less worried about others, but are we concerned about Christ? Are we concerned for Him and His glory?

There are too many today who flaunt the attitude that we must love God because of His great love for us, as if we either deserve or are worthy of God’s love, when the biblical way is that we love God first of all for who He is. He is God and most worthy of praise. Even if God did not love you, He is still worthy of praise, and must be adored and loved for that. Too many Christians expect God to be at their beck and call. The slightest problem in life, and suddenly God must get involved and sort our problems out. We need to realize that God is always involved in our lives. He never slumbers or sleeps.

It is crucial that we spend time considering the coming of our Lord. He will overthrow His enemies and crush them under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24-28). He will be glorious in victory because He has overcome death. “He was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him” (Hebrews 9:28). Let us rise up then out of spiritual indifference, and repent of our sins. Let us do again our first works ignited by our first love (Rev. 2:4,5) and let us say with the beloved John, “Amen, Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

## **The Regulative Principle of Worship**

*Russ Atmore*

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John Dick, the Scottish theologian of the nineteenth century wrote that, “some have supposed that the government of the church is ambulatory (changeable; italics mine), by which they mean, that no precise form has been prescribed, and that it is left to the wisdom of men to vary the form according to circumstances; to adapt it to the genius, and habits, and civil constitution of different nations.” William Cunningham further affirmed that the introduction of ordinances or arrangements into the worship and government in the Church was not warranted and indeed was unlawful if it was not approved, and sanctioned by Christ or His apostles. The Westminster Confession of Faith makes this comment in Chapter 21, section 1, “...But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations or devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.” The 1689 London Baptist Confession (Chapter 22, section1) makes the same statement, “...But the only acceptable way of worshipping the true God is appointed by Himself, in accordance with His own will. Consequently He may not be worshipped in ways of mere human contrivance, or proceeding from Satan’s suggestions. Visible symbols of God, and all other forms of worship not prescribed in the Holy Scripture, are expressly forbidden.”

Worship belongs to God only and to God alone. We have instructions in the Bible as to how we are to worship and how not to worship. Both of these statements we can readily grasp. On the one hand we understand that God has given us direction regarding worship and we should be desirous of obeying those instructions. On the other hand where Scripture forbids us we should be careful to not do that which God has forbidden us. However, what about where Scripture says nothing about worship, and we want to introduce something into our worship? The Westminster Confession states simply that anything not warranted is therefore excluded. In many respects this is sound advice to follow regarding the Christian life. If Scripture is silent let us not make it say something it does not, or what we want it to say. This applies equally to worship. The introduction of all kinds of aids and art to act as an aid to worship should be abandoned.

Genuine worship according to the Lord Jesus is to “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23, 24). Worship is simply the activity of giving glory to God in His presence with our hearts, minds and voices. We need much preparation for worship. I fear that the Church today has lost this discipline. We go to bed late on Saturday night, and we engage in activities that are not conducive to bringing us to a frame for worship. We sleep in on Sunday morning, and stumble out of bed and rush to make it to church. This is not the right way to be prepared for worship. Worship is discipline and delight all wrapped up together.

The things that are worthy of our attention are worthy of time investment. God demands worship from us. It is not an option to be considered sometime on Sunday morning. It requires attention and demands work. Churches today are seeking to make worship easy. There is way too much emphasis on music, testimony and too little emphasis on praying, reading and preaching the Word. I believe that singing is vital and necessary and has its rightful place but worship today seems to be designed to make you feel good about yourself, and not too much attention is paid to God. The first commandment has to do with worshipping God. God has no rivals, yet we have created all kinds of rivals to God and genuine worship.

Let us not go beyond Scripture. What Scripture does not mandate that we will not do! What Scripture commands that we will do! All indifferent things must have their origin and foundation in the Bible. What is not of faith is sin, and therefore things indifferent must be able to be related to faith or they too must be shunned. What God prohibits is not of faith, and is also not indifferent. Be careful of introducing into your worship that which is not of God. Be prepared for worship. Use Saturday to prepare your heart for the Lord’s Day. Get up early on Sunday and seek God, and then come and offer to Him that which rightfully belongs to Him from a fresh heart overflowing with love and adoration. That’s worship!

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*“I am daily waiting for the Son of God.”*  
*George Whitefield*

# Guilty of Eternal Sin (Mark 3:22 – 30)

Russ Atmore

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## Scripture

**Mark 3:22 – 30**

## Key Verse

*“whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness....”* Mark 3:29

## Theme

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the unpardonable sin. In this account recorded by Mark, Jesus states clearly that it can never be forgiven and that it is an eternal sin.

## Exposition

It is evident that the verses that deal with the unpardonable sin (vv. 28 – 30) are based upon and connected to the previous verses which deal with the binding of Satan (vs. 22 – 27).

Now that Jesus has appointed His disciples and given them authority so that he can now send them out as His apostles to preach, the opposition to Jesus intensifies. In verses 20, 21, Jesus has received pressure and opposition from His own family who were accusing Him of being insane. Now in verse 22 we find that scribes from Jerusalem have come to Capernaum and are questioning and accusing Him because of the works that He had done and was doing.

Their explanation was that He was performing His miracles because He was possessed by Beelzebul, and by the power of the prince of demons He was casting out demons (vs. 22). Mark, on the other hand is contrasting the view of Jesus' family – he is mad, and the view of the Pharisees – he is evil, with his view that Christ is who He claims to be – He is divine.

The accusation by the scribes against Jesus brings a powerful rebuke from Him. Jesus, first of all, refutes their accusation. Satan cannot drive out Satan – this is impossible and illogical (see vs. 23). In fact, not even Satan would do this because it would imply his downfall. Verse 24 brings this out – *“if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.”* In verse 26, Jesus again, brings out this point. Satan's own end would come about if he was divided against himself. In reality, the kingdom of darkness was alive and well, and very much a powerful force with Satan in full control of his operations. Satan was very much alive and seemingly indestructible. Divided houses do not stand – they fall, and Satan was not falling – he was standing firm.

In these statements by Jesus, you begin to sense that He is building up to some point. He has very clearly pointed out through logical means that Satan existed and was operational, but you sense that there is more to the issue of Satan than meets the eye.

It is in verse 27 that Jesus finally reveals the truth about who He is (that is, Jesus) and what He (Jesus) was truly doing. This is what the scribes were accusing Him of. They were casting aspersions upon His claim that he was the Son of Man (see 2:27). It is also clear that the evil spirits viewed Jesus as the Son of God (see 3:11).

Jesus views the victims of Satan as being the possessions of a strong man, but He states this in parable form in verse 27. How can these victims or possessions of the strong man be delivered from their captivity at the hands of a seemingly indestructible foe? The answer is simply – at the hands of someone who is stronger than the strong man.

Now inherent in this verse is the recognition that Satan possesses the souls of men. He has them locked up in his house and there is, it would appear no deliverance at hand, unless someone can enter Satan's house and steal these possessions back. Jesus uses the word "to plunder or to spoil" This contains the idea of dispossession. Now in order to plunder the goods (people), someone must bind the strong man. Someone must bind Satan.

In the context of the passage, it is Jesus who is saying of Himself that he is stronger than Satan. The scribes could not see beyond Satan, and certainly did not view themselves as captives by the devil. In the ministry of our Lord Jesus, He was destroying the power and influence of the devil. He was ransacking the house of Satan, and he was bringing these souls out of Satan's domain into His own kingdom. I do not think there is a more fitting way to describe what Jesus is doing. He is stronger than the devil – infinitely stronger. Too much power is credited to Satan today. It is wrong to view the evil one in this light. He must be viewed as a defeated foe, bound by Christ.

The promise for this is found in Genesis 3:15 – the first Gospel. In that passage, Satan is promised by God that he would only be able to bruise the heel of Christ, but that Christ would crush his head – the serpent's head. This is what Jesus did at Calvary. The ramifications of this binding are enormous. Where once Satan ruled the kingdoms of this world, now His power is powerless against the power of Jesus! Jesus is continuing to enter the strong man's house and plunder his goods, and Satan is powerless to prevent the Lord Jesus from doing this (see Mark 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Now, having said this, you would expect or think that Jesus might elaborate in a little more detail on this subject, but Jesus seems to head off into another subject. The reality is that what He says in verses 28 – 30 is the logical outcome of verses 22 – 27.

It is important to note that the scribes raised the issue of blasphemy back in verse 22, by attributing the works of the devil as being the works that Christ was doing. In order to further explain the issue of blasphemy, Jesus states that all sins of blasphemy can be and are forgivable (see vs. 28). However, Jesus says, in verse 29, that there is one sin that can never be forgiven. In fact, Jesus calls this sin an eternal sin and the person who commits it is viewed as eternally guilty.

The question of whether a person has ever committed this sin is probably the most profound and significant question that you could ever ask yourself. Genuine Christians have all asked this question of themselves. This is not a casual question to ask. It has serious consequences. The scribes were saying of Jesus that He had an evil spirit (vs. 30) – that He was possessed. The danger of being guilty of the very sin that Jesus was speaking about existed for these scribes. They were stubbornly resisting the Lord Jesus Christ, and if they were not careful they possibly would treat Him as the ultimate source of evil, and as being evil Himself. In fact, the passage seems to indicate that this was their position, and Jesus answer to them seems to confirm this in verses 23 – 26.

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to attribute to God the works of the devil. It is to regard the truth about God as being foolish and not worth consideration. Having said this, this implies that all men and women prior to conversion are in a position to commit the unpardonable sin, so the danger for them is very great.

Willful blindness, foolish rebellion and hardness hearts can simply fall over the edge into blasphemy against the Spirit and then there can be no hope of forgiveness. Is this not serious? This blasphemy is accompanied by complete indifference to sin. Christians, of course, are sensitive to sin. Unbelievers, under conviction of the Spirit, tend to develop sensitivity to the question of their sins. If this is your case, do not reject the influence of the Spirit lest you become indifferent and hardened to holy things.

**Application**

It should be apparent from this passage before us, that Jesus provides us with a great boost for evangelism and Gospel triumph. There is no power on this planet that compares to the redemptive power of Christ, or that can resist this power. It is simply irresistible. The power of Jesus to save is far greater than any power the devil may have or think he has to keep someone in his domain. Jesus transfers sinners out of the devil's kingdom into His own kingdom. He does this because He entered Satan's domain and bound him. I find this gives me great confidence because this power does not lie with us, but with God alone. This passage stresses the evil of Satan's work that is going on around us all the time. This passage stresses the need to be sensitive to sin. If you ever find yourself becoming de-sensitized to sin watch yourself. Pay careful attention to sin. Keep close to Christ, and you will never be guilty of this unpardonable sin.

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*“They do not love Christ, who love anything more than Christ.”*

*Thomas Brooks*

# Bible Quiz

Kaitlin Atmore

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## The Acts of the Apostles

D D C H A R I O T G O S P E L R  
 E E I A P C F F J U S T I C E S  
 N Z L V P F M R E O P I S J T P  
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 C E L I E T G R A E L A E R E E  
 E A E U R D E P R I V E D E A N  
 A L S Y A I H I V U N C L E A N

### Clues to Bible Quiz

Baptized, Caesarea, Chariot, Cripples,  
 Deprived, Divine, Ethiopian, Forgive,  
 Gamaliel, Gospel, Important,  
 Jerusalem, Judea, Justice, Messiah,  
 Ministry, Mourned, Official,  
 Persuaded, Pray, Preaching, Prison,  
 Queen, Rejoicing, Repent, Sanhedrin,  
 Scripture, Sheep, Silent, Spirits,  
 Stephen, Traveled, Unclean, Villages

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*“We do the works, but God works in us the doing of them.”*

*Augustine*