



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 37
Issue 919

Things I Misunderstood

Part 3

3 Things I Misunderstood about Christ's Sacrificial Work

Personal Reflections by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Key Points:

Jesus is not just a potential savior of the world but the actual savior of the world!..... 7770
The exact same "all" condemned by Adam, were the exact same "all" justified by Christ. 7770
Christ's work at the cross was not substitution, but union!... 7772

It was not God Who was alienated from man, but man who was alienated from God..... 7773
Christ's redemptive work did not just include humanity, but the entire universe as well..... 7773

I grew up with what I now realize was a greatly skewed view of what actually happened at Calvary. Then I taught this position for many years as a pastor.



It would take a long time for my paradigm to shift to fully embrace a different view of Christ's work at Calvary, a view that would bring a far greater peace to me.

#1 – I Misunderstood the SUCCESS of Christ's Sacrificial Work

I had mistakenly understood Christ's work as a potential, partial success. Christ would manage to save some of humanity – a very small part actually.

Although I would never admit it in this way, I unwittingly believed that Adam was greater than Christ. Adam had committed one act of disobedience which caused all of humanity to be made sinners. Yet, Christ's work at Calvary would not be able to successfully correct this grave sin problem.

Even though I would talk about Christ's words "It is finished," I didn't really understand it being finished. For me it was this ongoing work, that hopefully Christ would be able to save as many people as He possibly could. Humanity was just not cooperating very well. There were so many obstacles – the failure of Christians to faithfully evangelize, the resistance of the unbeliever's free will, and the satanic opposition. I thought that Christ was doing the best that He could under the daunting circumstances. God was doing the best that He could too. He certainly desired a better outcome, after all He was "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

I thought that what Christ did at Calvary was only effective for a small few who would hear of His work and accept it. Therefore, Christ would not be God's

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ultimate solution for the vast majority of mankind and their sin. Instead, I saw God's true solution for the sin problem, was torturous isolationism: the eternal torture of sinners in the dark, isolated outskirts of His Universe somewhere.

I had misunderstood God's real solution to sin to be unending torment. But what kind of solution was that? How did that fix anything? – Really? Is that all God could come up with? An all knowing, all powerful God? – Such thoughts were unfathomable!

After many years of study of the Scriptures, I would come to believe that Christ was really a *successful* Savior. I would come to understand that He was truly,

... *the Savior of the world* (John 4:42).

He was not just the world's **POTENTIAL** Savior, but the **ACTUAL** "*Savior of the world*"! He was not the **PARTIAL** "*Savior of the world*," but the "**Savior of the WORLD**"!

I would come to understand that Christ's one righteous act at Calvary was superior to Adam's one disobedient act. That Christ was in fact greater than Adam – far greater!

*Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came on **all** men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came on **all** men to justification of life* (Romans 5:18).

I would come to rejoice that the **exact same** "*all*" condemned by Adam's offense, were the **exact same** "*all*" justified by Christ's righteousness.

I would find immense peace in the certainty that the exact same "*all*" who die in Adam, are likewise the exact same "*all*" that are made alive in Christ!¹

*For as in Adam **all** die, even so in Christ shall **all** be made alive* (I Corinthians 15:22).

1. For a further look at this, see:

– [The Undoing of Adam \(and the Approach Present of God\)](#) (see the [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington").

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume 37, No. 919 – May 9, 2022

Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

Bible Student's Notebook™

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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2 – I Misunderstood the NATURE of Christ’s Sacrificial Work

I had mistakenly held Christ’s work to be *substitutional*. I essentially viewed God and Christ in conflict at Calvary.

The *substitutional* view of Calvary is one rooted in divine anger, wrath, vengeance, punishment, and retribution.

Here is the story of Calvary as I grew up hearing it, and would teach it for years myself, as a pastor:

God is holy and righteous. So much so, that He cannot even stand the presence of sin, let alone look upon it.² Therefore, mankind is under the fury of God’s endless wrath.

God’s holiness demands that the ungodly be punished for their sins. So, this is what Christ came to do *in our place*. He came to Calvary to pay the penalty of our sin, a debt we could never pay off ourselves.

Jesus hung, suspended between Heaven and Earth, God-forsaken,³ bearing our sin, as our sub-

- For years I would simply parrot the words that I heard over and over as a child,

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13).

I would never read the *next four words of the verse*, until decades later!

Though the prophet was saying that God was “*of purer eyes than to behold evil,*” and “*could not look on iniquity,*” he would then in amazement ask, “*So why do You ...?*” (HCS). Although the prophet thought God shouldn’t be able to, in fact, God did!

- I had misunderstood the words of Christ at Calvary:

stitute. He took our place and faced the wrath of God for us. He endured the relentless anger that we deserved.

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is to say, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

I did not have a scriptural grasp of these important words because I had never really appreciated that they were our Lord’s quotation of Psalm 22:1.

I mistakenly perceived these words as revealing that He had become ‘God-forsaken’ as our substitute.

But, why had Christ actually cited Psalm 22:1? Simply because He had become *identified with* broken humanity, and in *union* with our darkened world, He, just as mankind does from time to time, *felt* abandoned by God. He experienced our *sense* of alienation. But alas, it was all merely the mind’s *perception*.

You ... were ... alienated and enemies in your mind (Colossians 1:21).

You, being once estranged and enemies in comprehension (CV).

Jews at Calvary, who were well versed in Scripture, would have understood the *context* of Christ’s words “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” He was making clear for them the nature of the happenings at Calvary. Christ, fully engulfed in His union with mankind, identified with what it *felt* like to experience the *sense* of divine abandonment. But these *feelings were not the reality* of God’s relationship with Him. For as we read on in Psalm 22, we know that, contrary to a feeling of abandonment, God

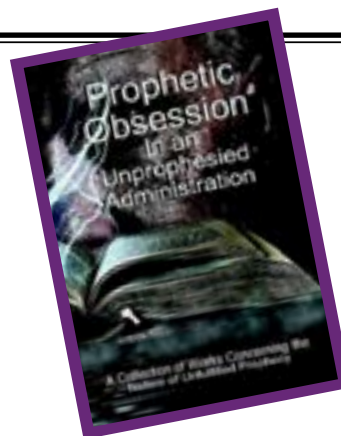
... has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard (:24).

Far from being abandoned by God, the very opposite is true: God never “*hid His face from Him.*”

Calvary is not the record of divine rejection, but divine embrace. And Psalm 22 is followed immediately by the 23rd Psalm, and these most endearing words:

The Lord is My shepherd; ... [and] though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with Me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort Me. You prepare a table before Me in the presence of Mine enemies: You anoint My head with oil; My cup runs over.

Calvary was the place of divine triumph over human darkness. It was the penetration of Adamic estrangement, by Christ’s oneness with humanity. By *His faith* Christ lifted us to divine reconciliation with our Father.



Prophetic Obsession in an Unprophesied Administration

(A Collection of Works Concerning the Nature of Unfulfilled Prophecy)

List of authors contained in this work are: Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), Cecil J. Blay (1906-1976), A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988), Andrew Miller (1810-1883), Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992) and C.R. Stam (1909-2003).

62 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under “*Compilations.*”

God poured out all of His unfiltered indignation on Christ, instead of us. God satisfied His holy vengeance on His Son. Christ endured the punishment that we deserved, so that we could be restored to God.

Yet, this substitutionary work was only ours if we would accept it. However, if we rejected our Substitute, then God would be forced to pour out all of His wrath and indignation directly on us. He would have no other choice. And since, unlike Christ, we were sinners, God's indignation on us would never be satisfied, thus we would suffer in the Lake of Fire, forever and ever.

This was the "gospel" as I had been taught it, and as I offered it, over and over, year after year. And I would make this offer with anger inflection in my voice, so as to properly honor God's holiness and wrath, and, as best I could, stress the dire seriousness of man's sinful situation for not "accepting Christ."

I misunderstood and conveyed to others that a war went on at Calvary for the souls of man. A war between a righteous God and His Son. The two were at odds with each other. On the one side was the Almighty God dispensing His full wrath and hatred on Christ – Who took it all for us. On the other side was Christ, excruciatingly appeasing the wrath of God.

It would take me decades to fully understand what had really happened at Calvary. I would come to believe His work, not as *substitutional*, but as *sacrificial*. I would rejoice in Christ, not as *victim*, but as *victor*. Not as taking God's furious *wrath*, but as manifesting His unfailing *love*. Not as a *substitute*, but in *oneness* – in oneness with His Father's purpose, and uniting Himself with humanity.

Christ, Who was the manifestation of His Father, entered into our brokenness and darkness, united with us in oneness, so that we of a surety would know the love of His Father, and that we would enter into His wholeness and light. *This was not substitution, but union!*

In Gethsemane and at Calvary, Christ joined us in the depths of our sin – death. We in turn, are joined with Him in the heights of His righteousness – resur-

rection life. *This was not substitution, but oneness!*⁴

We brought our part to this union: sin, alienation, and death. These were our contributions to the gospel.

Christ brought His part to this union: righteousness, harmony, and life. These were His contributions to the gospel. As one – we died together, and, as one – we are raised together.

Christ: God's "Approach Present"

I would come to see Calvary as a divine approachment,⁵ rather than appeasement. What happened in the death, burial and resurrection was not the *appeasing* of God's wrath, but the demonstration of His love. It was Him *approaching* mankind with His greatest treasure.

... **God was in Christ**, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them... (II Corinthians 5:19).

In my book *The Undoing of Adam and the Approach Present of God*⁶ I discuss the true nature of sacrifice in Scripture. As with other sacrifices, the death of Christ was a "gift" (i.e., "present") – yet, in this case, the gift was not from man to God, but from God to man.

Calvary was God's *approach present*, whereby He "drew near" to (i.e., "approached") alienated mankind. This is a very important truth to understand. This is approachment rather than appeasement, reconciliation rather than retribution, grace rather than works, kindness rather than anger, love rather than wrath.

Nearly 300 times the *Concordant Version*⁷ uses the

4. For more on the erroneous idea of substitution, see:
– [The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching](#) (see [order form](#) under "Compilations").
5. "The act of coming near." – *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster (1828).
6. Available at [Study Shelf](#) (see the [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington").
7. The *Concordant Version* is available from [Study Shelf](#), and can be found on the [order form](#) under "Bibles."

phrase “*approach present*.” **It was not God Who was alienated from man, but man who was alienated from God.** Calvary was God’s “*approach present*,” offered for the purpose of reconciling mankind to Himself.⁸

*For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's **approach present** (Ephesians 2:8, CV).*

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation (II Corinthians 5:18-19, CV).

“*God was in Christ*”

Contrary to what I had been taught, Christ was not alienated from God at Calvary *in our place*. Instead, “*God was in Christ*” with mutual purpose.

I would come to rejoice that God and Christ were not at odds with each other at all. I would let go of

8. Not only is this important truth covered in [The Undoing of Adam and the Approach Present of God](#) (see [order form](#) under “Pilking-ton”), it is also covered in a video teaching at [Biblical Resources](#).

imagined “divine rage” for the grand truth of *world reconciliation*. I would exchange hatred for love. I would give up an ugly gospel for a beautiful one!

*... God was in Christ, **reconciling the world unto Himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them... (II Corinthians 5:19).*

#3 – I Misunderstood the SCOPE of Christ’s Sacrificial Work

Initially, and for much of my young adulthood, I would understand the *scope* of Christ’s work being limited to only those who would accept His offer of salvation.

However, as mentioned previously, I eventually came to see that salvation would include more than the few who could properly decide to muster up faith. I would see Christ as

... the Savior of the world (John 4:42).

However, following quickly on the heels of this understanding would be the realization that the *scope* of Christ’s redemptive work was *far broader* than humanity. I would embrace it as the reconciliation of the Universe!

(see *SACRIFICE*, last page)

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Tidbits of Truth #39



“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

Ministry Among the Celestials

“... and your feet sandaled with the readiness of the evangel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15).

[Excerpt:] The ecclesia ought to be shod with the readiness of the evangel of peace, for that is the feature which they are effectively to minister amongst the Celestials.

— John H. Essex (1907-1991)
“Blessings Among the Celestials”
The Disruption of the World

Evangelism & Our Main Ministry Concern

[Excerpt:] It is not our task to convert the world, or even to win souls for Christ. We can leave that to God, Who, in any case, has already chosen the members of the ecclesia. It is true that we may be privileged to pass on the truth to others, and we should be alert to grasp any opportunity which presents itself, but our main concern should be to upbuild the ecclesia, ministering to our fellow members in love,

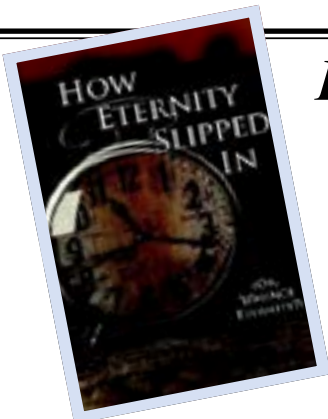
emphasizing always that Christ is our Head.

— John H. Essex (1907-1991)
God’s Celestial Purpose

Otis Q. Sellers

[To J.F.:] Sellers did not believe in eternal torment, but like Bullinger and Welch, who were all dispensationalists, he did believe in annihilation,¹ and in the trinity.² Both Gelesnoff and Knoch, who were faithful students of Bullinger, thankfully took the understandings of their teacher even further in the Scriptures. And it is our prayer that we can, while appreciating the students of Scriptures who came before us, also continue to advance on in clarity as well.

- [Editor:] For a look at the error of Annihilationism, see:
 - “Annihilation,” Howard N. Bunce, [Bible Student’s Notebook #791](#);
 - “Letter to an Annihilationist,” [Bible Student’s Notebook #230](#).
- [Editor:] For a clear, concise expose’ of trinitarianism, see,
 - *No Equals! Reasons Why Our Heavenly Father has No Equals or Co-Equals & Why “the Holy Spirit” Is Not a “Person” Separate from the Only True God, the Father*, available through [Study Shelf](#), or [see order](#) form under “Other Authors.”



58 pages, PB

See [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”

How Eternity Slipped In (Or, Whence Eternity?)

by — Alexander Thomson (1889-1966)

The inspired Scriptures never speak of “eternity.” They describe nothing as eternal. They contain no term which in itself bears our time sense of “everlasting.” As eternity is not a subject of revelation, our present object is to discover how and when this unscriptural term gained entrance into theology with most disastrous results. As this is really a historical investigation, it will be necessary to allude to a considerable number of historical events, and to quote from a number of by-gone translators and their versions. It is hoped that such a study, along with an examination of various primitive words dealing with time, will dispel any doubts in the minds of those who do not feel thoroughly assured regarding the use of the word eonian in place of eternal.

Although we would not agree with many of the authors that we share in the BSN, who write on prophecy (or any other subject), yet there were those who were associated with Knoch who also shared a different understanding of Israel's unfulfilled prophecy, for example: Alexander Thomson (who did significant work on the *Concordant Version*),³ R. B. Withers, J.G.H. Steedman, Cecil Blay, Melvin Johnson, E. A. Larsen, etc.

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

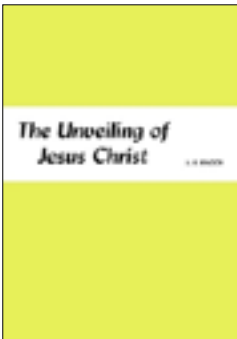
The Need for Adjustment

[*Edited excerpt:*] There is everywhere, on the part of believers, a sickish tendency to perceive of themselves as needing no adjustment in doctrine when once they have become settled in certain self-satisfying forms which they have been persuaded to be pure divine truth. They lose the mental and spiritual elasticity which is an imperative pre-requisite for continuous acquirement of truth. Our love dies in the cages of fixed forms and customs. Stagnation and petrification sets in. Before it is realized we have been made mummies in petrified dogmatism.

What we then consider progress and growth consists of being “indoctrinated” and “established” in the forms. We lose the ability and the desire to test and try what is, and what is not of God. An almost un-

3. Ernest O. Knoch (1906-1991) wrote concerning Thomson:

“Thomson’s untiring and unselfish labors were invaluable in the compilation of the Concordant Version, and they have left an undying impression on the accuracy and value of that work. [... Thomson and A. E. Knoch] were singularly alike in their unflinching stand for the truth as they saw it, and in their untiring effort to ferret it out from the Word of God. Both were unselfishly devoted to ... the compilation of the *Concordant Version*.” – *Other Co-Laborers in Christ*



The Unveiling of Jesus Christ
by — A.E. Knoch

A study on the Book of Revelation, commonly called The Revelation of St. John. Including: The Mystery of the Seven Stars, The Mystery of God Finished, The Mystery of Babylon.
605 pp., PB See [order form](#) under “Knoch.”

avoidable consequence of such attitude is *man-worship*, and that even without being aware of it. We look to the teachers who have established our particular “system” to which we are attached, and dare not, or cannot, think for ourselves. We have become prisoners – slaves. We get into doctrinal ruts and grooves, and dare not (or are too lazy) to even try to get out of them. We are out of adjustment.

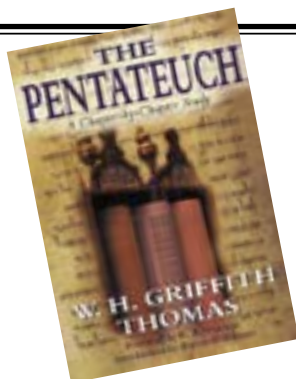
— E.A. (Edward Alfred) Larsen (1884-1978)
The Differentiator Vol. 12, No. 5 (1950)

BSN

[Larsen was the founding editor of *The Differentiator*, contributor to *Unsearchable Riches*, and author of the book, *What is Sectism?* (see [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”)]

TOPICS:

Major: [*Ministry Among the Celestials:*] Celestials; Ministry; Evangelism [*Evangelism & Our Main Ministry Concern:*] Ministry; Evangelism [*Otis Q. Sellers:*] Sellers [*The Need for Adjustment:*] Adjustable; Attitude; Growth; Tradition



The Pentateuch – A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

by — W.H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924)

This is a dispensational collection of notes on the first five books of the Bible. Each section begins with a helpful introduction followed by a chapter-by-chapter study of the text. Thomas was cofounder with Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Theological Seminary. He was also a contributor to E.W. Bullinger’s

192 pp., PB *Things to Come* magazine. See [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”

SACRIFICE (continued from page 7773)

Beyond Adam’s descendants, redemption would include *all*. Paul’s declaration of triumph was that the scope of Christ’s sacrificial work included, not only the Earth, but the Heavens as well!⁹

*And, having made peace through the blood of His stake, by Him to reconcile all unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be **things in EARTH**, or **things in HEAVEN** (Colossians 1:20).*

Although we do not yet see the full result, in due course, Paul further affirms,

*That in the **Dispensation of the Fulness of Times** He will gather together in one all in Christ, both **which are in HEAVEN**, and **which are on EARTH**; even in Him (Ephesians 1:10).*

What a glorious scope of reconciliation! It is indeed *universal!*¹⁰ **BSN**

9. Alienation, in need of reconciliation, is not limited to mankind on the Earth, but also includes Celestial beings in the Heavens:

*the Heavens are not clean in His sight (Job 15:15);
the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials (Ephesians 6:12, CV).*

10. For further study, see:

- [The Salvation of All](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. (see [order form](#) under “Clyde Pilkington”); as well as an abridged excerpt:
- [Nothing Will Be Lost](#); or the much larger, comprehensive compilation:
- [The Divine Reconciliation of the Universe](#) (see [order form](#) under “Compilations”).

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NOTE: For the video version of this study, [Things I Misunderstood about Christ’s Sacrificial Work](#), go to our Biblical Resources channel on YouTube.

Topics:

Major: Salvation of All; Substitution; Reconciliation; Approach Present; Appeasement

Minor: Forsaken; Habakkuk 1:13; Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1



The Myth of Easter

“The Christian Mythology” Series

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

There are many myths in Christendom. They have managed to master their own form of mythology. Easter is an example of such a religious fable.

If Easter is the celebration of the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection, then why does its date change every year? Historical dates do not fluctuate; but Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. Have you ever wondered why?

It is one of the glaring clues that something is seriously wrong with Christendom. The Western Christian religion can’t seem to get anything right when it comes to even the simplest of Scriptural truths.

72 pp, BK.
See [order form](#) under
“Clyde Pilkington.”

Have you ever really considered if there is any scriptural basis of Good Friday or Easter Sunrise Services that are so commonly observed by the religious community? Additionally, have you ever considered what Easter Rabbits and Easter Eggs have to do with the resurrection of Christ or teachings of God’s Word?

Although millions of people are of the opinion that Easter and all of its customs are Christian and originated as a result of Christ’s resurrection, it is a historical fact that the observance of Easter long antedates Christianity by centuries.