

Saturday, October 28, 2017

Standing in the Gap for the Gospel



Biblical Answers to the Groundless Gospel

A Defense of the Faith.

“Now I declare to you, brothers, the gospel, which I announced as good news to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved. For what statement have I preached to you if you retain it? Except if not, you believed to no purpose. For I delivered to you in first order of importance that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas then by the Twelve.”[1]

– The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians, 55 A.D.[2]

The objections which I answer in this article were stated to me by Pastor Daniel Reehoff of Dayspring Baptist Church located in Waukesha, Wisconsin. My dialog with Pastor Reehoff occurred on July 6, 2014. Pastor Reehoff is causing spiritual damage to the church by promoting these false teachings about the Gospel. Pastor Reehoff is a false teacher because he is promoting false doctrine, saying that Christ’s burial is not part of the Gospel.

Interestingly enough, Dayspring Baptist Church is a church-plant of Pastor James Scudder and Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church in Lake Zurich, Illinois. Pastor Scudder

is the founder of Victory in Grace Ministries and his church hosts an annual Grace Conference in the Chicagoland area.

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #1: While discussing the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, Pastor Reehoff said: “First Corinthians 15 is not a list of what a person has to believe for salvation.”

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #1: But in 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul *is* listing the facts of the Gospel. The New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson (1863-1934) affirms that “in 1 Cor. 15:4 Paul employs a present perfect indicative of the Resurrection of Jesus [i.e. ‘he has been raised’] in the midst of a long list of aorist indicatives [e.g. ‘died,’ ‘buried,’ ‘appeared’].”[3] John MacArthur also affirms that in 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul lists the facts of the Gospel.[4] MacArthur writes: “...For anyone familiar with Paul’s writings, one of the first texts that will come to mind as a succinct summary of the gospel is 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. Paul himself identifies this passage as a digest of essential gospel truths: ‘Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen.’ Verse 3 would be better translated, ‘I conveyed to you the principal matters.’ That’s the true sense of what he is telling them. Both the English Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible say, ‘I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.’ What Paul clearly has in mind here are the elements of gospel truth that come first in order of importance. He goes on to give an abbreviated outline of historical facts in chronological order. He names four events that constitute the key climactic events of the whole gospel narrative: the crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and subsequent appearances of the risen Christ....[Paul’s] design is to give the most simple, pithy account of gospel history possible – one that comprehends and implicitly affirms all the vital doctrines as well. Each point he lists is indeed a matter of primary importance: ‘Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and...He was seen.’”[5] Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 and the parallel passages found in Acts 13:28-31 and Mark 15:37-16:7, Christian apologist William Lane Craig similarly writes: “This remarkable correspondence of independent traditions is convincing proof that the four-line formula (which, as is evident from the grammatically unnecessary repetition of ‘and that’ [*kai hoti*] at the head of each line, list sequentially four distinct events) is a summary in outline form of the basic events of Jesus’ passion and resurrection, including his burial in the tomb. We thus have evidence from two of the earliest, independent sources in the New Testament for the

burial of Jesus in the tomb.”[6] I can anticipate a groundless gospel person responding to the above quote by William Lane Craig and saying something like, “Well, he may say it’s a list but he doesn’t say it’s the Gospel.” Ah, but here’s another quote where he does, in fact, say it’s the Gospel! Notice what Dr. Craig says in his lecture titled “The Work of Christ – His Resurrection” – he points us to 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 and affirms “that Paul lists...the four essentials of the Gospel”: “For our Scriptural data on this subject, I want to turn to just two central passages in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 is the first Scripture that we want to turn to...What does Paul say? He says in verse 3, ‘For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,’ and now comes this four line formula: ‘that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas,’ or Peter, that is the Aramaic word for ‘Peter,’ the name for him, ‘then to the Twelve.’ So notice here [in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5] that Paul lists as part of the four essentials of the Gospel the death of Christ for our sins, his burial, his resurrection on the third day, and then his postmortem appearances to various individuals and groups.”[7]

Let’s take a closer look at how Paul lists the facts of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. Notice there is a series of three “and that” (*kai hoti*) clauses linking the facts of Christ’s death (15:3), burial (15:4a), resurrection (15:4b), and appearances (15:5). It may be clearer to see the wording in the text: “*that* Christ died for our sins...*and that* He was buried...*and that* He was raised...*and that* He was seen” (1 Cor. 15:3-5). If “First Corinthians 15 is not a list” then how does Pastor Reehoff explain the series of “and that” (*kai hoti*) clauses repeated three times in 1 Corinthians 15:4ff? The answer is he *didn’t* explain it. In fact, as I will go on to point out, he admitted that he hadn’t even looked at the Greek! This is truly a tragedy, especially on the part of a pastor. New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson points out that “the chief reason why preachers do not get and do not keep up a fair and needful knowledge of the Greek New Testament is nothing less than carelessness, and even laziness in many cases. They can get along somehow without it, and so let it pass or let it drop.”[8] In regards to the series of three “and that” (*kai hoti*) clauses in 1 Corinthians 15:4ff, this is what A. T. Robertson says in his classic book *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (pp. 1181-1182): “*The Mere Connective (‘And’)...*The simple copulative idea [i.e. joining together coordinate words or word groups and expressing addition of their meanings] is...the most common use of *kai* where words are piled together by means of this conjunction...The chain with *kai* as the connective may go on indefinitely...So we have *kai hoti* [“and that”] three times in 1 Cor. 15:4 (*kai* to connect *hoti* clauses).” Dr. S. Lewis Johnson (1915-2004), who was for many years Professor of Hebrew, Greek, and Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, summarizes the significance of the four *hoti* clauses in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 when he states: “The substance of Paul’s message is contained in the four *that’s* following **received** [in 1 Cor.

15:3ff], and it includes Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances. These things make up the Gospel." [9]

Does a person have to believe "the Gospel" (1 Cor. 15:1) to be saved? Is it saving truth? Contrary to what Pastor Reehoff has said, 1 Corinthians 15 (verses 3-5, i.e. the Gospel) is indeed something a person has to believe for salvation! This is made clear in the first couple of verses in the chapter when Paul says "by this Gospel you are saved" (1 Cor. 15:2, NIV). In *The Theological Wordbook*, co-authored by "four Dallas Theological Seminary stalwarts and theological statesmen - Donald K. Campbell, Wendell G. Johnston, John F. Walvoord, and John A. Witmer" [10] and subtitled "*What the Bible Teaches on 200 Theological Terms and Their Relevance for Today*," Donald Campbell (the third president of Dallas Theological Seminary) [11] writes the following in his discussion of the term "Gospel": "The gospel message is simply that 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve' (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Paul said this was the gospel he preached to the Corinthians and it was the message by which they received salvation." [12] Pastor Jim Scudder Jr. of Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church (the sending church of Pastor Reehoff's church) affirms: "How can you be saved? What is the mode? What is the method? They received by believing. How can you be saved? How can your friends be saved? How can those at your work place be saved? How can your children be saved? How can your family be saved? How can your neighbors be saved? They also can be given the Gospel and they also would respond in faith by believing in Him. It's so simple. And it says [in 1 Corinthians 15:1] they received it, meaning they believed and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were saved by it - look back at verse 2 [of 1 Corinthians 15]: "*by which also ye are saved*". Saved from what? Saved from - a lot of things, but really the main one is Hell! Right? Some people are like, 'You know, a lot of preachers just preach a message of the Gospel and people just want to get fire insurance.' Well, yeah, don't you want to not go to Hell? That's a really good motivation. There's a lot of other things that happen at salvation. It's not just about escaping Hell - but that's a pretty big thing! We're saved from Hell!" [13] The words of Free Grace theologian William R. Newell (1868-1956) are appropriate when he writes: "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel...For it is the power of God unto salvation** [Rom. 1:16] - The second 'For' gives the reason for Paul's boldness: this good news concerning Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearing [see 1 Cor. 15:3-5], 'is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth.' There is no fact for a preacher or teacher to hold more consistently in his mind than this." [14] "Again we repeat that it is of the very first and final importance that the preacher or teacher of the gospel believe in the bottom of his soul that the simple story, Christ died for our sins, was buried, hath been raised from the dead the third day, and was seen, IS THE POWER OF GOD to salvation to every one who rests in it - *who believes!*" [15]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #2: Pastor Reehoff said that 1 Corinthians 15:3ff is Christian-life truth only, and not a checklist of what to believe for salvation.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #2: Actually, it's both (as Pastor Jim Scudder Jr. alluded to above when he said, "Saved from – a lot of things, but really the main one is Hell!"). Although I don't agree with Pastor Dennis Rokser's interpretation of the Gospel, he is correct to explain: "The Gospel offers the good news of SALVATION to us. (1 Cor. 15:2a)...by which also you are saved...The present tense of 'saved' may be viewed in two possible ways. First, Paul may be communicating that these Corinthians via the Gospel were being presently saved from the POWER OF SIN in their Christian lives as long as they remained steadfast to the Gospel, just like they had been saved from the PENALTY OF SIN (Hell) when they had trusted in Christ. In other words, the Gospel they had received would continue to have saving effects from spiritual damage upon their lives 'if you hold fast the word which I preached to you.' In the second view, the apostle may be indicating that the Gospel continues to bear fruit in Corinth by various [unsaved] sinners continuing to receive it, and as a result being 'saved'. Both views are presented by Dr. S. Lewis Johnson in his comments on 1 Corinthians in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 1255." [16] The comment of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson on 1 Corinthians 15:2 is as follows: "Ye are saved (Gr., present tense) may refer to continual salvation from the power of sin in the lives of believers, or it may refer to the day-by-day salvation of the inhabitants of Corinth as they received the message and formed part of the church of Jesus Christ." [17]

While I agree that both interpretations of "saved" in 1 Corinthians 15:2 are acceptable, for the moment I'm focusing on the second of the two interpretations: the Gospel will save people from Hell! This understanding of 1 Corinthians 15:2 is also supported by Zane Hodges (1932-2008), who taught New Testament Greek for 27 years at Dallas Theological Seminary. Notice what he says: "The problem in correctly understanding this verse [1 Cor. 15:2] is caused by the English translation. A very flexible Greek verb (*katecho*) is translated 'hold fast' in the New King James Version (the AV has 'keep in memory'). But the verb could equally well be rendered 'take hold of' or 'take possession of' [e.g. Matt. 21:38, NIV; Lk. 14:9, NIV]. In that case it would refer to the act of appropriating the truth of the Gospel by faith. Closer examination of the Greek text suggests that this is indeed the correct understanding. The Greek word order can be represented as follows: 'by which also you are saved, by the word I preached to you, if you take hold of it, unless you believed in vain.' From this it appears that Paul is thinking of the saving effect of the preached word when it is duly appropriated, unless in fact that appropriation (by faith) has been in vain. What he means by believing 'in vain' is made clear in verses 14 and 17: 'And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty [the AV has 'vain' for

'empty']. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins [the AV has 'vain' for 'futile']. First Corinthians 15:2 must be read in the light of the subsequent discussion about resurrection. Paul is simply saying, in verse 2, that the Gospel he has preached to them is a saving Gospel when it is appropriated by faith, unless, after all, the resurrection is false. In that case, no salvation has occurred at all and the faith his readers had exercised was futile. But naturally Paul absolutely insists on the reality of the resurrection of Christ. He therefore does not think that the Corinthians have believed 'in vain.'"[18]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #3: Pastor Reehoff said that a person does not have to believe in Christ's burial or resurrection appearances to be saved.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #3: But what does the Bible say? Does the Bible say a person doesn't have to believe in Christ's burial and resurrection appearances to be saved? On the contrary, Christ's burial and resurrection appearances are included in Paul's preaching "this message of salvation" in Acts 13:26-41 (see verses 29-31 in particular) which he calls "the good news" in verse 32. Interestingly enough, even doubting Tom Stegall (the main false teacher of the Free Grace groundless gospel) acknowledges that Acts 13:23-41 is the saving Gospel! Stegall says: "It is imperative to understand, for the purpose of determining the content of the gospel, that from Acts 13:23 onward Paul is preaching 'the gospel' of Christ." [19] Stegall goes on to say that "we may safely conclude that Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus Christ as Savior starting at Acts 13:23." [20] And again Stegall emphasizes that "the actual *content* of the gospel itself [is] (13:23-41)." [21] Several pages later in his article Stegall references the same passage, referring to it as "that first Galatian gospel presentation in Acts 13:23-41." [22] Dr. Gary Habermas has pointed out that when both sides agree on something in a debate, the point on which there is agreement is considered to be true. And so Acts 13:23-41 argues against Reehoff's bold claim that a person does not have to believe in Christ's burial or resurrection appearances to be saved.

Additionally, in the book of Romans, Paul writes: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?" (Rom. 10:16). In Romans 10:16, Paul calls Isaiah's message "the gospel". Paul is quoting Isaiah 53:1. Isaiah chapter 53 includes prophecies of Christ's death (Isa. 53:5), burial (Isa. 53:9) and that "He shall see His followers, He shall prolong His days" (Isa. 53:10, The Berkeley Version). Dr. C. I. Scofield in his book *What Do the Prophets Say?* (pages 57-58) affirms that Isaiah chapter 53 is one of "the evangelistic messages of Isaiah (Isa. 53)". Commenting on the gospel in Isaiah 53, Herbert Lockyer (the author of *All the Doctrines of the Bible* and similar books) relates the following true story from the life of D. L. Moody: "When Moody was asked to conduct his first mission in London in 1874, union meetings were comparatively new. The committee asked him to explain his methods.

Everything went smoothly until one member asked him his creed. Moody calmly replied, 'My creed is already in print.' A member seized a paper and pencil and asked where it could be found. 'In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah,' Moody answered." [23]

Furthermore, Christ's burial and resurrection appearances are also included in Paul's famous declaration of the saving Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. This too is contrary to Reehoff's assertion that a person does not have to believe in Christ's burial or resurrection appearances to be saved. And so just looking at these three New Testament books of Acts, Romans, and 1 Corinthians (and the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament), these passages of Scripture do *not* support the claim that a person does not have to believe in Christ's burial or resurrection appearances to be saved. Instead these Scriptures argue strongly against that claim. [24]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #4: Pastor Reehoff said he agrees with Duluth Bible Church and Pastor Dennis Rokser because they are his friends and they are doing a lot of good things.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #4: But in Galatians 1:10 the apostle Paul says that we should be God-pleasers not people-pleasers. Pastor Reehoff is compromising the truth of the Gospel because he is friends with Pastor Dennis Rokser. Free Grace author William R. Newell writes: "Was Paul a milk-and-water [weak, insipid] man? Are you? Why was Paul willing to be vehement concerning the truth? Gal. 1:10. Always distrust a preacher who is salving things over for you or is afraid to displease you. Such men are not servants of whom? Gal. 1:10." [25]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #5: Pastor Reehoff doesn't think we should name names when pointing out false teaching.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #5: But the Apostle Paul named the names of false teachers like Hymenaeus and Alexander (see 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17), and Paul said to follow his example as he follows Christ (see 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17). Christian apologist Dr. Walter Martin (1928-1989), author of the classic book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, correctly states: "We don't wish to do this [name names] because we don't want to offend people. You can't use names [people say]. Since when? *'Hymenaeus and Philetus have erred concerning the truth. They teach the resurrection is past. They overturn the faith of the church.'* [2 Tim. 2:17-18] Didn't Paul say that? *'Alexander the coppersmith hath done me much harm. May the Lord reward him according to his works.'* [2 Tim. 4:14.]" [26]

Furthermore, at the 2007 Grace Conference, I personally heard Pastor James Scudder Sr. name John MacArthur as a false teacher. So does Pastor Reehoff have a problem with one of his own pastors calling John MacArthur a false teacher? I doubt it!

So here we have an inconsistency and double standard, namely: Pastor Reehoff doesn't have a problem with Pastor Scudder calling John MacArthur a false teacher, but he has a problem with me saying Dennis Rokser is a false teacher because Reehoff is personal friends with Rokser! Not only is this a failure to warn the flock of wolves like Paul tells us in Acts 20:28-31, but it is compromising the truth of the Gospel for the sake of pleasing people like Paul writes about in Galatians 1:6-10.

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #6: This is not so much an objection as an admission. Pastor Reehoff admitted that he hadn't even looked at 1 Corinthians 15 in the original Greek. He admitted that he was not familiar with the Greek in 1 Corinthians 15, but said he was open to looking at it. I suggested *Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament* by A. T. Robertson. Pastor Reehoff said he had this book in his library.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #6: New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson makes it very clear in his book *Word Pictures of the New Testament* that according to the original Greek language of the New Testament, all four verbs in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 are part of the Gospel which Paul received from the Lord and delivered to the Corinthians: "[1 Cor. 15, verse] 3. *First of all (en prōtois)*. Among first things. *In primis*. Not to time, but to importance. *Which I also received (ho kai parelabon)*. Direct revelation claimed as about the institution of the Lord's Supper (11:23) and same verbs used (*paredōka, parelabon*). Four items given by Paul in explaining 'the gospel' which Paul preached....The four items are presented by four verbs (*died, apethanen, was buried, etaphē, hath been raised, egēgertai, appeared, ōphthē*). *Christ died (Christos apethanen)*. Historical fact and crucial event. *For our sins (huper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn)*. *Huper* means literally over, in behalf, even instead of (Gal. 3:13), where used of persons. But here much in the sense of *peri* (Gal. 1:14) as is common in *Koine* [Greek]. In 1 Peter 3:18 we have *peri hamartiōn, huper adikōn*. According to the Scriptures (*kata tas graphas*). As Jesus showed (Luke 22:37; 24:25) and as Peter pointed out (Acts 2:25-27; 3:35) and as Paul had done (Acts 13:24f.; 17:3). Cf. Ro 1:2ff. [1 Cor. 15, verse] 4. *And that he was buried (kai hoti etaphē)*. Note *hoti* repeated before each of the four verbs as a separate item. Second aorist passive indicative of *thaptō*, old verb, to bury. This item is an important detail as the Gospels show. *And that he hath been raised (kai hoti egēgertai)*. Perfect passive indicative, not *ēgerthē* like *rose* of the King James' Version. There is reason for this sudden change of tense. Paul wishes to emphasize the permanence of the resurrection of Jesus. He is still risen. *On the third day (tēi hēmerāi tēi tritēi)*. Locative case of time. Whether Paul had seen either of the Gospels we do not know, but this item is closely identified with the fact of Christ's resurrection. We have it in Peter's speech (Acts 10:40) and Jesus points it out as part of prophecy (Luke 24:46). The other expression occasionally found 'after three days' (Mark 10:34) is merely free vernacular for the same idea and not even Matt. 12:40 disturbs it. See on Luke 24:1 for

record of the empty tomb on the first day of the week (the third day). [1 Cor. 15, verse] 5. *And that he appeared to Cephas (kai hoti ophthē Kēphāi)*. First aorist passive indicative of the defective verb *horaō*, to see. Paul means not a mere 'vision,' but actual appearance. John uses *ephanerōthē* (John 21:14) from *phaneroō*, to make manifest, of Christ's appearance to the seven by the Sea of Galilee. Peter was listed first (*prōtos*) among the Apostles (Matt. 10:2). Jesus had sent a special message to him (Mark 16:7) after his resurrection. This special appearance to Peter is made the determining factor in the joyful faith of the disciples (Luke 24:34), though mentioned incidentally here. Paul had told all these four facts to the Corinthians in his preaching." [27]

Thus even in the book of Romans, A. T. Robertson looks back to Paul's definition of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. Commenting on Romans 2:16, Robertson writes: "[Rom.] 2:16 *According to my gospel (kata to euaggelion mou)*. What Paul preaches (1 Cor. 15:1) and which is the true gospel (Gal. 1:6-9)." [28]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #7: Pastor Reehoff said that I should find another church – and this was before he had even looked at 1 Corinthians 15 in the original Greek to see if I was right! (Pastor Reehoff had previously told the same thing to a friend of mine on a separate occasion when this friend had tried to talk with Reehoff about 1 Corinthians 15 and the truth of Christ's burial and resurrection appearances in the Gospel.)

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #7: Isn't it premature to ask people to leave the church because of a doctrinal issue if, by your own admission, you haven't even studied it out for yourself? The Bible says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). Also consider what the Bible says in Proverbs 18:13 (KJV): "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Other translations put it this way:

- "He who answers a matter before he hears the facts, it is folly and shame to him" – Amp
- "To answer a question before you have heard it out is both stupid and insulting" – NEB
- "He who answereth a matter before he heareth it, exposeth his folly and incurreth contempt" (Septuagint).

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #8: Pastor Reehoff doesn't think the burial is part of the Gospel because Jesus doesn't mention it to Nicodemus.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #8: Jesus doesn't specifically mention His bodily resurrection to Nicodemus either. Is the bodily resurrection of Christ not part of the Gospel because Jesus doesn't explicitly mention it to Nicodemus? No, of course not. But it's implied in the context – just like Christ's burial. Where is Christ's burial in John chapter 3? It's implied, not denied. According to the Old Testament Jewish Law, what was to be done with the corpse of anyone who was "lifted up" (Jn. 3:15) on a tree? It was commanded that the body surely be buried! This Jewish Law is found in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and it reads as follows: *"If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."* In Galatians 3:13, the apostle Paul quotes from this passage of Scripture and applies it to Christ. And so we see that in light of the Old Testament, the burial of Christ is implied in the context of John chapter 3.

Pastor Reehoff's objection shows that he fails to understand progressive revelation. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus during the dispensation of the Mosaic Law (see Galatians 4:4) and before the events of the Passion Week occurred. We cannot expect Nicodemus to be held accountable to believe truth that was not revealed like it has now been revealed after the events of the Gospel have taken place. So just because Jesus didn't explicitly mention His burial to Nicodemus doesn't mean it's not part of the Gospel.

Dr. Charles Ryrie (1925-2016) and other dispensationalists affirm that people have always been saved by faith, but the content of faith changes in different dispensations and according to God's progressive revelation. Charles Ryrie writes: "The *basis* of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the *requirement* for salvation in every age is faith; the *object* of faith in every age is God; the *content* of faith changes in the various dispensations. It is this last point, of course, that distinguishes dispensationalism from covenant theology, but it is not a point to which the charge of teaching two ways of salvation can be attached. It simply recognizes the obvious fact of progressive revelation."^[29] Similarly, Arnold Fructenbaum states: "Let it be stated categorically that Dispensationalism has not and does not believe that the Law of Moses was a means of salvation. This concept is rejected because it would make salvation by means of works. Salvation was and always is by grace through faith. While the content of faith has changed from age to age, depending on progressive revelation, the means of salvation never changes. The law was not given to serve as a means of salvation (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 21)."^[30]

Here are several more points I would like to make in regards to the objection that says Christ's burial isn't part of the Gospel because Jesus didn't mention it to Nicodemus in John chapter 3:

- The apostle John wrote John chapter 3 (e.g. John 3:16) from a resurrection perspective after the events of the Gospel took place. But Nicodemus did not have a resurrection perspective in John chapter 3 because the resurrection of Jesus had not yet occurred.
- John 20:30-31 is the main purpose statement of John's Gospel. Thus, John 3:16 must be understood in light of John 20:30-31. In other words, John 3:16 must be understood in light of the historical facts of the Gospel such as the death, burial, resurrection, and manifestation of Christ which the apostle John highlights in his Gospel narrative.
- The only sign given to Nicodemus and his generation was the sign of Jonah the prophet (see Matthew 12:38-41). And the sign of Jonah the prophet points to, among other things, the burial of Christ. Even Tom Stegall acknowledges that the sign of Jonah the prophet prefigures or points to the burial of Christ. For example, he says that "God prophetically and typologically ordained that Christ should be in the tomb for '*three days and three nights*' (Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40; 26:61; 27:40, 63)".[31] Nicodemus may not have understood this before the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but that only proves my point about progressive revelation.
- Jesus talks about being "born again" in John chapter 3. Similarly, the apostle Paul says that the Corinthians were "begotten [born-again] through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Is Paul contradicting Jesus? Do we now have to down-size the Gospel and forget about progressive revelation? Do we have to remove the burial and resurrection of Jesus from the Gospel because they are not fully explained in John chapter 3 and Nicodemus may not have known about them? (Even though he should have from the Scriptures!) No, of course not. That's backwards. Again, this is where progressive revelation and dispensationalism come into play and are very important to understand. In other words, as Charles Ryrie and other Bible teachers have pointed out, people have always been saved by faith in God's revealed truth, but the content of faith changes in different dispensations and according to God's progressive revelation. The often quoted statement by Augustine is worth repeating: "Distinguish the ages, and the Scriptures harmonize."[32]
- We need to be careful not to isolate John chapter 3 apart from the rest of the Gospel of John and apart from the rest of the New Testament. By selecting the words of Jesus in John chapter 3 to the exclusion of further divine revelation

(such as where the Lord Jesus does specifically mention His burial to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 for example; cf. Gal. 1:11-12), Pastor Reehoff is not taking into account “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), and not “accurately handling the Word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

- The context of John chapter 3 is pre-cross. So we cannot expect the same amount of revelation in John chapter 3 as we have now after the cross. It has been said: “The Old Testament [in which Jesus lived, Gal. 4:4] is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” This is progressive revelation in an axiom.
- John chapter 3 is not the only place in the Bible that talks about the new birth and being born again. We could even say that John chapter 3 is not the only place in the Bible where *Jesus* talks about being born again because the Bible talks about it in other passages and Jesus is the divine author of all Scripture. And in reference to the Gospel, the apostle Paul said that he received his Gospel directly from Jesus Christ (see Galatians 1:11-12). New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson affirms: “It was the boast of Paul that he had a direct revelation of the gospel of Jesus (Gal. 1.11 f.).”[33] And of course, the Bible says that people are born again through the Gospel (1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:23-25, NKJV).
- The clearest declaration of the Gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15, not John chapter 3. Pastor Jim Scudder Jr. of Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church affirms: “The best place in Scripture to find the gospel in a concise fashion is First Corinthians 15:1-4 [more accurately 1 Cor. 15:1-5]...Notice in verse one that this ‘gospel’ that he preached, they had received. In verse three, it is the same gospel he had received. Then he finished verse three with defining what he and they had received, *Christ died for our sins...he was buried, and that he rose again the third day...*”[34] Similarly, Pastor Dennis Rokser writes: “In fact, the most definitive passage in the New Testament explaining to us the very content of the Gospel is found in this same book, 1 Corinthians chapter 15.”[35] One last example will suffice to illustrate my point that the clearest declaration of the Gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15, not John chapter 3. In his book *Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God*, Dr. David Jeremiah shares the following true story in a daily devotional titled “DEFINING THE GOSPEL”: “Duncan McNeil, the Scottish evangelist, once said that in school he had a seminary professor who insisted on opening his theology classes with a question. No one could ever anticipate what the question would be. One day he said to his students, ‘Gentlemen, can someone give me a definition of the gospel?’ A student rose and read John 3:16: ‘For God loved the world so much that he gave

his only Son so that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.' The professor said, 'That is a good gospel text, but it is not a definition of the gospel.' Another student read 1 Timothy 1:15: 'How true it is, and how I long that everyone should know it, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – and I was the greatest of them all.' Again the professor declined to accept it; he waited for what he wanted. Finally, a student stood and read 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, much to the professor's delight. It was evident that he had the reply he desired; he said, 'Gentlemen, that is the gospel. Believe it, live it, preach it, and die for it if necessary.'"[36] And so there is a general consensus of agreement among Free Grace Bible teachers (and even non-Free Grace Bible teachers) on this key point of doctrine.[37]

- In response to Reehoff's objection that Christ's burial isn't part of the Gospel because Jesus didn't specifically mention it to Nicodemus, we could very well ask: "Don't you believe in progressive revelation and the various dispensations?"[38] Furthermore, don't you believe in 'the whole counsel of God'? John chapter 3 is not the only place in the Bible that talks about being born again." In 1 Corinthians 4:15, for example, the apostle Paul says that the Corinthians were "begotten [i.e. born again] through the gospel." And Paul specifically mentions Christ's burial in his Gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:4). Again, you can't isolate John chapter 3 apart from the rest of John's Gospel or from the rest of the Bible.
- Someone might object and say: "The Gospel of John was written after 1 Corinthians 15 so in light of progressive revelation the Gospel of John is the final word." In response to such an objection I would point out that the apostle John highlights the burial of Christ in his Gospel narrative (see John 19:38-42). Furthermore, the apostle John preached the same Gospel message as the apostle Paul (see 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Gal. 2:6-9). Dr. Gary Habermas affirms: "The bottom line was that Paul's Gospel teaching, which included the resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:1-5), was approved by the other three apostles [Peter, James, and John]. They added nothing to his message (see [Gal.] 2:6, 9)."[39] What's more, as I pointed out earlier, even groundless gospel advocates agree that the clearest declaration of the Gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15.

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #9: Pastor Reehoff doesn't think that Christ's resurrection appearances are mentioned as part of the content of saving faith anywhere in Scripture.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #9: Notice that Reehoff uses the phrase “content of saving faith”. I’ve noticed that groundless gospel advocates seem to shy away from using the word “gospel” (probably because in 1 Corinthians 15 “the gospel” is clearly defined and it includes Christ’s burial and resurrection appearances). Instead they like to use the more ambiguous phrase “content of saving faith” – that way they can define it however they want.

It’s important to understand that the Gospel is the content of saving faith. The Gospel is the saving message. The Gospel is the message a person has to believe to be saved. In other words, there is no dichotomy between the Gospel of salvation and the content of saving faith. Even Tom Stegall affirms that “*Free Grace Christians must be clear and unequivocal in using biblical language, as we confidently proclaim ‘the gospel of the Christ’ as God’s saving message to the lost.*”[40]

In 1 Corinthians 15, Christ’s resurrection appearances are included in the Gospel - they are included in the *kai hoti* (“and that”) content clause “*and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve*” (1 Cor. 15:5).[41] In a glaring admission, even Tom Stegall admits that in this passage of Scripture, Christ’s burial and resurrection appearances are part of the Gospel! Notice what Stegall says in the chapter of his book titled “What Is the Gospel According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-11?”: “Christ’s burial and post-resurrection appearances...are never presented anywhere else in Scripture as being either part of ‘the gospel’ or as being essential saving truth.”[42] This statement is subtle but significant. Notice that Stegall *doesn’t* say: “Christ’s burial and post-resurrection appearances are never presented anywhere in Scripture as being part of ‘the gospel’....” Instead he says: “Christ’s burial and post-resurrection appearances...are never presented anywhere *else* in Scripture as being part of ‘the gospel’....” That’s a huge difference! The two statements do not mean the same thing at all. The first statement (the one Stegall doesn’t say) would mean that Christ’s burial and resurrection appearances are never presented anywhere *at all* in Scripture as being part of the Gospel. Whereas the second statement – Stegall’s actual statement - means that there’s only one place in all Scripture (according to Stegall) where Christ’s burial and resurrection appearances *are* presented as part of the Gospel and he’s talking about that one place. The little word “else” that Stegall uses is significant and affects the meaning of the sentence in a big way. And so when Stegall says: “Christ’s burial and post-resurrection appearances ...are never presented anywhere *else* in Scripture as being either part of ‘the gospel’ or as being essential saving truth” – he’s admitting that at least in this passage in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff, Christ’s burial and appearances *are* presented as being part of the Gospel or as being essential saving truth!

Similarly, Stegall contends that there are “No *Parallel Burial/Appearances Passages*” to the passage in 1 Corinthians 15. In other words, he doesn’t believe that Christ’s burial or resurrection appearances are listed as part of the Gospel or the contents of saving faith anywhere *else* in Scripture besides 1 Corinthians 15. But this is a telling admission

because even he can't dismiss 1 Corinthians 15 as a "Burial/Appearances Passage" because clearly Christ's burial and appearances are listed as part of the Gospel in this passage of Scripture. The best Stegall can do is say there are "No *Parallel...Passages*" besides the passage in 1 Corinthians 15. But even *if* this were true (that there are no other passages of Scripture which include Christ's burial and resurrection appearances in the Gospel and 1 Corinthians 15 is the only passage that does), it raises the obvious question: *What's wrong with 1 Corinthians 15?* Especially since Stegall's own pastor has said: "In fact, the most definitive passage in the New Testament explaining to us the very content of the Gospel is found in this same book, 1 Corinthians chapter 15." [43] Of course, what's wrong with 1 Corinthians 15 from the groundless gospel point of view is that it clearly includes Christ's burial and resurrection appearances in the Gospel. [44]

However, Stegall's contention that there are "No Parallel Burial/Appearances Passages" to the one in 1 Corinthians 15 is false in light of several passages in both the Old and New Testaments which include Christ's burial and appearances in the Gospel. I will mention some of these passages, such as: Psalm 22 (A Messianic Psalm), Psalm 40 (another Messianic Psalm), Isaiah 53 – which Dr. C. I. Scofield calls one of "the evangelistic messages of Isaiah (Isa. 53)," [45] and there is also the narrative of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and manifestation in the Gospel of John, also Acts 13:26-41, and furthermore other sermons in Acts such as Peter's sermon in Acts chapter 10:38-43 (Christ's burial is implied in verses 39-40; cf. Deut. 21:22-23). And so in contrast to what Stegall and others have said, there are actually a number of parallel burial/appearances passages in Scripture to the passage in 1 Corinthians 15!

In response to Pastor Reehoff's specific objection that Christ's resurrection appearances are not mentioned as part of the content of saving faith anywhere in Scripture, I personally like what the Bible says in Psalms 40:1-3. This is a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, and the text says, "*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto Me, and heard My cry. He brought Me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set My feet upon a rock, and established My goings, and He hath put a new song in My mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*" Here it is prophesied that many will see the praise on the lips of the Risen Christ and shall trust in the LORD! [46]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #10: Amazingly, Pastor Reehoff said he had a problem with me referring to false teaching and paganism as darkness or "the dark side". He didn't like me saying that and he said it was not profitable.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #10: But the Bible clearly says otherwise. Ephesians 5:11 says: "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Psalm 119:130 says that the entrance of God's Word brings light. Another Bible verse in the Old Testament says: "To the Law and to the Testimony! If it does not agree

with this it is because it has no light in it!" (Isaiah 8:20). So it's clear that the concept of darkness and light is straight from the Bible, and Christians are called to expose the darkness with the light of God's Word.

Pastor Reehoff said we should "just stay positive" when presenting the Gospel. I guess he doesn't tell anyone they are a sinner because that's not positive. And what about when the Bible says that salvation is "not by works" (Titus 3:5) and "not of yourselves" (Eph. 2:8)? That's not positive either. It's negative. But it's the truth of God's Word. And we have to preach the Word and "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction" like the Bible says in 2 Timothy 4:2. The apostle Paul said that if he were still trying to please men, he would not be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:10-11). The apostle Paul had stern words for those who would distort the Gospel of Christ (see Galatians 1:8-9).

Pastor Reehoff's statement that we should "just stay positive" when presenting the Gospel reminds me of Joel Olsteen and his methods. These preachers don't want to offend people with the truth. But these were not the methods of our Lord Jesus who said things like: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (See Matthew 23:1-26.) Nor were they the methods of the great apostle Paul. Shortly before his martyrdom, the apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." The words of Dr. Walter Martin are appropriate when he says: "You see, we have been bemuted [Editor's Note: *bemute* is an old English word meaning "to drop dung on from above, as does a bird"] for many years that all we have to do to discharge our obligation as Christians is to go out into the world and tell people that Jesus loves them. Once we have done that [some say], we have accomplished our task. This is *not* New Testament theology. I don't know where it developed from originally, but it did not originate with the Holy Spirit. For if you read all through the New Testament, you will find an amazing fact. You will find that almost *half* of it is an apologetic document. That is, the men who were speaking were speaking in defense of the faith. And they were giving reasons for their belief in Jesus Christ. When our Lord was questioned by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, by the Herodians, by the people who were constantly trying to entrap Him - Jesus did not turn around and say, "God loves you. The Lord bless you. Depart in peace. Everything's going to be alright. Remember, love one another." And then preach them the Sermon on the Mount. You will not find that theology in the New Testament. Jesus spent the time to answer their questions. And He spent the time to reprove and rebuke what they said, because they were distorting the truth of God. Some of the most scathing words ever found on this planet were uttered by the Man who said, "Permit the little children to come to Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." And the world is always ready to have the Jesus with the Roman nose, the light beard, the long hair, the Nordic features,

and the milk-sop theology. It will always welcome this Jesus, but it will never stand for the Jesus who said, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting flames, prepared for the devil and his angels since the foundation of the age." The world will listen to the love of God but the world wants nothing to do with the justice of God. And it is strange that when the Christian stands up for his faith, he is accused of attacking the world. The truth of the matter is, when the Christian stands up his faith, he is emulating his Master, for that is precisely what Christ and the apostles did. There is a verse in Scripture which, I believe, has great significance. It's found in the book of Jude. It's a simple verse. And I'm sure that you have memorized it at one time or another, or should have. It's verse 3. Jude said, "When I wrote to you concerning our common salvation, it was necessary for me to urge you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." That's the King James. But the Greek is a little better. The Greek says, "When I wrote to you about our common salvation, it was necessary for me to urge you to put up a stiff fight for the faith, once for all time delivered to the saints." [47]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #11: Pastor Reehoff said that Jesus never mentioned His resurrection appearances; therefore they are not part of the Gospel.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #11: Contrary to what Pastor Reehoff has said, the Lord Jesus did mention and even emphasize His resurrection appearances on a number of occasions. For example:

- In Luke 11: 29-30 Jesus likened Himself to the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament who appeared to the Ninevites after being three days in the belly of the great fish.
- In John 14:19 Jesus told His disciples: "Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, *but you will see Me*. Because I live, you also will live."
- Again Jesus said to His disciples: "In a little while you will see Me no more, *and then after a little while you will see Me*." (Jn. 16:16)
- In Mark 16:6-7 some of Jesus' followers go to His tomb after Sabbath. They find the tomb empty and the large stone that had sealed it was rolled away from the entrance. An angel is there sitting on the right side. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. *There you will see Him, just as He told you.*'"

- After His resurrection Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who went to look at Jesus' tomb and He said to them, "Do not be afraid, Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there *they will see Me.*" (Matthew 28:10)
- After His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples and "He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? *Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.*' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'" (Lk. 24:37-48) Augustine affirms: "What have we got in the gospel? That Christ rose again in the same body as was buried; that he was seen, that he was touched and handled, that to the disciples who thought he was a spirit he said, *Feel and see, that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you can see that I have* (Lk 24:39). What does the apostle [Paul] oppose to this?"[48]
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus emphasized the physical reality of His resurrection by appearing to His disciples on three different occasions after He was raised from the dead (see John 20:19-21:14).
- In Galatians 1:11-12 the apostle Paul says that he received his Gospel directly from Jesus Christ, and part of what Paul received from the Lord was the fact that Christ appeared to the twelve disciples (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-5). New Testament Greek scholar Dr. W. Harold Mare affirms: "Part of the gospel message Paul passed on to the Corinthians was eyewitness reports of the resurrection of Christ."[49] This is the message Christ gave to the apostle Paul. So here again Jesus mentioned His resurrection appearances and even highlighted them in the Gospel!

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #12: Pastor Reehoff actually said that Jesus never mentioned His burial therefore it is not part of the Gospel.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #12: Three examples will show that Reehoff's statement is false:

- In Matthew 26:11-12 Jesus specifically talks about His burial, even using the words "my burial"!
- And of course there is also the sign of Jonah the prophet that Jesus gave to the unbelieving Jews of His day (see Matt. 12:39-41) prior to His death, burial, and resurrection. Among other things, the sign of Jonah the prophet has reference to the burial of Christ. Dr. C. I. Scofield writes: "THE historical character of the man Jonah is vouched for by Jesus Christ (Mt. 12:39-41), as also that his preservation in the great fish was a 'sign' or type of our Lord's own entombment and resurrection. Both are miraculous and both are equally credible."[50] Free Grace theologian Roy B. Zuck affirms: "Jonah's three days and three nights in the fish's stomach illustrates Christ's burial."[51] Even Tom Stegall acknowledges that the sign of Jonah the prophet has reference to the burial of Christ. For example, Stegall says that "God prophetically and typologically ordained that Christ should be in the tomb for '*three days and three nights*' (Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40; 26:61; 27:40, 63)".[52]
- Jesus did mention His burial when He gave Paul the Gospel. In Galatians 1:11-12 the apostle Paul says that he received his Gospel directly from Jesus Christ, and part of what Paul received from the Lord was the fact "that He was buried" (see 1 Corinthians 15:4). Dr. George Meisinger, the President of Chafer Theological Seminary ("a non-crossless Free Grace school"[53]) affirms: "Paul plainly makes known a sufficient gospel. He received it (from Jesus Christ Himself, Galatians 1:11-12), preached/delivered it as did other apostles, and the Corinthians as thousands of others throughout the Roman Empire received/believed it. What did they preach and receive: Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, rose the third day according to the scriptures, and was seen by multiple eye-witnesses."[54] This is the message which Christ Himself gave to the apostle Paul. So here again Jesus mentioned His burial and even highlighted it in the Gospel!

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #13: Pastor Reehoff said that the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 thirty years after Jesus' resurrection so people didn't have his Gospel before that.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #13: This statement by Reehoff shows how ignorant he really is of the passage in 1 Corinthians 15, because the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:1, “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you” (1 Cor. 15:1, NIV). Paul is making it clear to the Corinthians that the Gospel is not new information to them. Paul says it’s the same message he preached to them before (see Acts 18:1-11). Paul continues this same thought in verse 2 when he asks, “For what message did I preach to you, if you retain it?” (Some translations leave out the question and translate it as “if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you”. Either way, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of the Gospel which he had preached to them at some earlier point in time.) Paul makes it very clear – and it is plainly obvious - that people had his Gospel before he reminded them of it in 1 Corinthians 15!

Furthermore, the apostle Paul clearly says that he “received” the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3). He didn’t start it - it didn’t originate or begin with him, he was simply passing along an earlier tradition. New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce affirms: “Paul was but repeating what he had received from those who were in Christ before him when he delivered to the people of Corinth ‘as of first importance’ the good news of Christ’s death, burial, and variously attested resurrection. 1 Cor. xv.3 ff.”[55] In the book *Jesus and the Gospel*, theologian James Denney (1856-1917) similarly writes: “For what Paul taught in Corinth was the common Christian tradition (ver. 3 ff.); he had been taught it himself when he became a Christian, and in his turn he transmitted it to others. But Paul became a Christian not very long after the death of Christ – according to Harnack one year after, to Ramsay three or four, to Lightfoot perhaps six or seven. At a date so close to the alleged events we find that the fundamental facts of Christianity as taught in the primitive circle were these – that Christ died for our sins; that He was buried; that He rose again on the third day and remains in the state of exaltation; and that He appeared to certain persons. The mention of the burial is important in this connexion as defining what is meant by the rising. We see from it that it would have conveyed no meaning to Paul or to any member of the original Christian circle to say that it was the spirit of Christ which rose into new life, or that He rose again in the faith of His devoted followers, who could not bear the thought that for Him death should end all. The rising is relative to the grave and the burial, and if we cannot speak of a bodily resurrection we should not speak of resurrection at all. In the same connexion also we should notice the specification of the third day. This is perfectly definite, and it is perfectly guaranteed.”[56] Dr. Gary Habermas summarizes the truth well when he says: “Few conclusions in current study are more widely held by scholars than that, in 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul records a very ancient tradition that actually predates his book, probably by a couple of decades. It could very well predate even Paul’s conversion to Christianity. After explaining that he received this from others, Paul succinctly reports the Gospel that was preached in early Christianity: Christ died for our sins and was buried. Afterwards, he was raised from the dead and appeared to many witnesses.”[57]

In response to Reehoff's objection, it makes little difference who Paul received the Gospel from (from the Lord, Gal. 1:11-12; from the other apostles, Gal. 1:18, 1 Cor. 15:11; from others in Christ before him, Rom. 16:7, etc.); the point is that the Gospel predates Paul. The Gospel was being preached by the apostles and other Christians before Paul's conversion to Christianity (see Gal. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:1-11).

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #14: Pastor Reehoff said that if an unsaved person didn't believe Jesus was buried then that means Jesus must have been cremated in which case he thinks a resurrection would be impossible. (Reehoff is reasoning that if an unsaved person believes that Christ was resurrected, they will also believe Christ was buried.)

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #14: A person's beliefs are not always consistent and do not always make sense. Even Tom Stegall affirms: "Thankfully, the Lord does not require of us complete theological consistency in order to be saved." [58] (While it's true that God does not require complete theological consistency in order to be saved, He does require us to believe the Gospel. And contrary to what Stegall is saying, the burial of Christ is part of the Gospel.) Just because an unsaved person believes that Christ was raised from the dead doesn't necessarily mean they believe He was buried. And if an unsaved person doesn't believe that Christ was buried, they don't really believe the Gospel! (See Isa. 53:9; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:4, etc.)

Furthermore, cremation is not the only alternative to burial as Reehoff suggests it is. In fact, a dead person does not have to be buried or cremated! For example, a corpse can remain out in the open laying on top of the ground somewhere and then be resurrected from that spot. There is even a Biblical example of this in Revelation 11 with the two witnesses. They were killed, their dead bodies lay in the street for three days and then God brought them back to life! (Another example, this one from the Old Testament, is the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel chapter 37.)

I believe that even cremated Christians will be resurrected because the Bible says that "our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). It is no difficulty at all for God to resurrect those who have been cremated because with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26; Mk. 10:27, 14:36; Lk. 18:27). Christian apologist and author Dr. Norman Geisler affirms: "Of course, it should be pointed out that cremation is no hindrance to the act, or event, of the resurrection. God, in His omnipotence, is certainly able, if He so chooses, to collect every atom and molecule, no matter where it is found in the universe, and reconstruct our same bodies in a glorified state." [59] Is Reehoff saying that cremation is something like the unpardonable sin, and

that resurrection is impossible for those who have been cremated? Just because someone is cremated does not mean a resurrection is impossible.

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #15: Pastor Reehoff said: “I think we are kind of knit-picking. It’s just semantics.”[60] Another person on staff at Reehoff’s church told my friend that we are just too “picky, picky, picky!”

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #15: But either the burial of Christ is part of the Gospel or it’s not. Somebody is right and somebody is wrong. Somebody is preaching the true Gospel and somebody is preaching a false gospel (like Paul talks about in Galatians 1:6-10). There is the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood like the Bible says in 1 John 4:6. Dr. Warren Wiersbe, the well-known and trusted Bible expositor and former pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, affirms: “We should test everything by the truth of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. He was seen alive by many witnesses. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. (See 1 Corinthians 15.)”[61]

In response to Pastor Reehoff’s statement that “we are kind of knit-picking,” I like what the famous New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson says: “The preacher is of necessity a student of words.”[62] (It reminds me of how Paul in Galatians 3:16 makes a point to distinguish between the plural form of a word and the singular form!) And in regards to Reehoff’s comment that “It’s just semantics,” Charles Ryrie makes a good rebuttal in his book *So Great Salvation*. In the chapter titled “Semantics Alert!” Ryrie writes: “A good choice of words is essential if we are to state the Gospel clearly and accurately. How often I have heard the retort, ‘It’s only a matter of semantics.’ In my experience it usually came from students using it as a defense mechanism to justify a poor answer to a question. And usually the question involved defining or explaining carefully the meaning of a biblical doctrine or concept. ‘A matter of semantics’ was supposed to excuse fuzzy thinking and a poor, if not wrong, choice of words. IS SEMANTICS IMPORTANT? Actually, semantics is not an excuse, nor is it incidental; it is the whole point. Semantics involves the study of meanings of words; so if a person uses words that do not convey the meaning he or she is attempting to express, then a different meaning comes across. If semantics is the study of meanings, then one has to be alert to semantics in all communication. For example, when an attorney draws up a contract, he or she must pay careful attention to semantics. The choice of words may determine whether or not the contract, if challenged, will remain in force or can be broken. The meaning of words – semantics – forms the basis for the validity and intention of that contract. Likewise, Bible students and preachers must pay careful attention to semantics. How carefully they express the meanings of verses, passages, and doctrines will determine the effectiveness and accuracy of communicating God’s

message to others. (I am not speaking of the matter of differing interpretations. One can hold a wrong interpretation of a passage and yet express it clearly; so too may one have a correct interpretation and express it badly.). What is the purpose of language? Language was given by God for the purpose of His being able to communicate with man. To be sure, man has corrupted language; but God saw to it that He had sufficient vehicles in languages with which He could communicate to us and we to Him. Although language was confused at the Tower of Babel so that people could no longer understand each other's speech, God nevertheless chose Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic as sufficient and adequate languages to convey His revelation of truth in the Bible. And, in the other direction, we find English and German and French and any other language on earth adequate to carry our communication in prayer to God. The Christian philosopher Gordon Clark wrote: 'If God created man in His own rational image and endowed him with the power of speech, then a purpose of language, in fact the chief purpose of language, would naturally be the revelation of truth to man and the prayers of man to God. In a theistic philosophy one ought not to say that all language has been devised in order to describe and discuss the finite objects of our sense-experience.... On the contrary, language was devised by God, that is, God created man rational for the purpose of theological expression. If we acknowledge that language came from God so that He can communicate to us (and we to Him), then semantics, which studies the meanings of words, is crucial if we wish to communicate His truth accurately.' Furthermore, it seems to me that those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible ought especially to be concerned with accuracy in communicating the truth. All the Bible is without error and important to us. Certainly how we as Christians express the Gospel ought to be our greatest concern. We do not want to confuse or shortchange or obscure God's good news of His grace – how He gave His Son so that we might have eternal life through faith in Him. Semantics is key in understanding and communicating the Gospel.”[63] Free Grace author Charlie Bing affirms, “as Ryrie points out, semantics is the battleground, and clarity in terms and definitions is essential.”[64]

And in response to Reehoff's statement that we are “knit-picking” and his church staffer's statement that we are being too “picky, picky, picky” – here are three reasons why I want to be picky about the Gospel:

1. I want to be picky about the Gospel because the Devil is crafty (Gen. 3:1). We must remember that subtle errors are oftentimes the most dangerous ones. Pastor John Ashbrook has well said: “The most dangerous deviation is the one closest to your own position.”[65]
2. I want to be picky about the Gospel because the goal is accuracy: “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

3. I want to be picky about the Gospel because the Lord is picky. God is picky about the Gospel! (See: Gal. 1:6-10; 1 Cor. 1:17, 1 Cor. 15:1ff; 2 Cor. 4:2, 11:3-4; Col. 4:3-4, etc.)

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION # 16: The grave is not talked about as a good thing at the end of 1 Corinthians 15.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #16: According to Reehoff's line of reasoning we could say that neither is death talked about as a good thing at the end of 1 Corinthians 15 (see 1 Cor. 15:26, 54, 55, etc.), but it's still part of the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:3). But let's take a closer look at the text.

In 1 Corinthians 15:55 the King James Version (KJV) reads, "Oh grave, where is your victory?" – but the Greek word for "grave" in the Received Text (the Greek text from which we get the King James Version) is *Hades*. Although some mistake *Hades* for the grave, they are two different places. (*Hades* is the abode or realm of the dead, "the common receptacle of disembodied spirits," as Thayer has said in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.^[66] Similarly, H. A. Ironside says in his commentary on Psalm 16 that "Hades...is the place for disembodied spirits between death and resurrection, that is, the unseen world."^[67]) Hence, 1 Corinthians 15:55 in the New King James Version (NKJV) reads, "O Hades, where is your victory?" But even this is probably not the best nor the most accurate reading. There is general agreement among New Testament scholars that the correct reading of 1 Corinthians 15:55 should be "O death" (Greek *thanato*) not "O Hades". The best and oldest New Testament Greek manuscripts read *thanatos*, not *Hades*. Thus the NIV more accurately translates verse 55, "Where, O death, is your victory?"

For those who are curious, here's what some of the New Testament scholars have written concerning the correct reading of 1 Corinthians 15:55:

- A. T. Robertson: "O death (*thanato*). Second instance. Here Paul changes *Hades* of the LXX [Septuagint] for Hebrew *Sheol* (Hosea 13:14) to death. Paul never uses *Hades*." (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:55.)
- Marvin Vincent: "O grave (*hade*). Which is the reading of the Septuagint. The correct reading is *thanate*, O death. So Rev. [RSV.] *Hades* does not occur in Paul's writings. In Romans 10:7 he uses *abyss*. Edwards thinks that this is intentional, and suggests that Paul, writing to Greeks, may have shunned the ill-omened name [*Hades*] which people dreaded to utter." (Vincent, *Word Studies*, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:55.)

- Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown: "For 'O grave,' the oldest manuscripts and versions read, 'O death,' the second time [in 1 Cor. 15:55]." (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:55.)
- C. G. Findlay: "Paul freely adapts the words of Hosea, repeating *thanate* in the second line, where Hosea writes *sheol* (LXX *hade*), since death is the enemy he pursues throughout (Edwards notes that *hades* never occurs in Paul's Epistles)". (Findlay, W. R. Nicoll, Editor, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, 5 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 942.)
- W. E. Vine: "In 1 Cor. 15:55 the most authentic mss. have *thanatos*, 'death,' in the 2nd part of the verse, instead of *Hades*, which the A.V. [KJV] wrongly renders 'grave' ('hell,' in the marg.)." (Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, entry for HADES.)
- C. I. Scofield: In *The Scofield Reference Bible*, the marginal note for "grave" (1 Cor. 15:55, KJV) reads "death." [68]
- Spiros Zodhiates: "The change from 'grave' in the King James Version to 'death' in most of the modern translations is justified, since the Greek word *hadees*, which occurs in the *Textus Receptus*, does not occur in most manuscripts, and Paul never uses the word. Therefore the text we accept is, 'Where thy, death, the victory? Where thy, death, the sting?' This is the literal translation in the exact order in which the words occur in the Greek text." [69]

For those who follow the Textus Receptus or Received Text (the Greek text underlying the English King James Version), it's important to remember that even *if* the correct reading in 1 Corinthians 15:55 is *Hades* (as opposed to *thanatos*) - *Hades* is not the grave. In his book *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Biblical scholar and theologian W. E. Vine (1873-1949) writes: "HADES (*hades*), the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the ascension of Christ)...It corresponds to 'Sheol' in the OT. In the A.V. [KJV] of the O.T. and N.T., it has been unhappily rendered 'hell,' e.g., Ps. 16:10; or 'the grave,' e.g. Gen. 37:35; or 'the pit,' Num. 16:30, 33; in the N.T. the Revisers [i.e. the RSV] have always used the rendering 'Hades;,' in the O.T. they have not been uniform in the translation, e.g., in Isa. 14:15, 'hell' (marg., 'Sheol'); usually they have 'Sheol' in the text and 'the grave' in the margin. It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of

Gehenna. For the condition, see Luke 16: 23-31....*Note:* In 1 Cor. 15:55 the most authentic mss. have *thanatos*, death, in the 2nd part of the verse, instead of *Hades*, which the A.V. wrongly renders 'grave' ('hell,' in the marg.)."[70] Dr. H. A. Ironside (1876-1951) likewise sees a difference between Hades and the grave. Commenting on the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter 16, Ironside writes: "Others say 'You [Mr. Ironside] are mistaken when you think of Hades as a condition in which men are found after death. Hades is simply the grave.' I do not believe this for one moment. Scripture, I am certain, teaches the very opposite."[71] Similarly, William R. Newell (responding to Bullingerism) writes: "Bullinger says: 'Hades, - we might call it *Gravedom*. There is not a place where the rendering *grave* would not be appropriate.' (for Hades). Now Matthew 16:18 at once proves this utterly false! Church saints' bodies have been buried in *graves* constantly; but Hades, the region at the earth's center (Matthew 12:40; Acts 2:27, R.V.), since our Lord's resurrection, has not admitted one saint into its gates: 'The Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (the Church)."[72] It's quite clear that there's a distinction between *Hades* and the grave and the one should not be confused with the other.

The bottom line is that once again Pastor Reehoff is not going back to the original Greek. What's worse, his objection is based on a mistranslation (i.e. the word "grave" in the KJV). No wonder Free Grace author William R. Newell (writing in 1938) advises: "Always read the Revised Version about the words Sheol – Hades: for it transliterates them. The King James simply obscures them by various renderings [such as 'hell' and 'grave']."[73] All in all, it's clear that Pastor Reehoff is unfamiliar with the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 15 and his objection is groundless in light of the Greek.

We must never forget that despite the sadness associated with death and burial, it is a reverent and good act to give someone "a proper burial" (Eccl. 6:3, NIV). Remember how the devil fought with Michael the archangel over the body of Moses? (See: Deut. 34:5, 6; Jude 9.) The devil no doubt had evil schemes planned, but the Bible says that *God buried Moses* (Deut. 34:5, 6). This was of course a good and decent act. To say otherwise is to charge God with wrong doing!

And we know it's good and honorable to burial our loved ones, don't we? We know this because the Bible teaches that it's honorable to bury someone and dishonorable to leave a person unburied. (See: Gen. 23:4, 25:9, 49:29-32; Deut. 10:6, 21:22-23, 28:26, 34:6; 2 Sam. 21:10-14; 1 Kings 14:10-14, 16:4, 21:23-24; 2 Kings 9:34-37; Psa. 79:1-4; Eccl. 6:3; Isa. 14:19-20, 53:9; Jer. 7:33, 8:1-2, 16:4, 16:6, 22:19, 25:33, 36:30; Ezek. 29:5; Matt. 26:1-13; Jn. 19:38-42; Heb. 11:22; Rev. 11:9, etc.)

Furthermore, why would Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus want to bury Jesus (see John 19:38-42) if it was a bad thing? Why would they ask to bury Jesus if it wasn't a good thing? These were Jesus' followers (Jn. 19:38-39), not His enemies! A. T. Robertson affirms: "It was fitting that two members of the Sanhedrin should give Jesus a

decent burial. Nicodemus and Joseph laid him away in simple dignity. Where were the disciples?"[74]

In the article "CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S," theologian H. C. G. Moule expounds on the text of St. John 19:42, "There laid they Jesus." Moule writes as follows: "MUCH emphasis is laid in Scripture, and also in the great Creeds of the Church, upon the Burial of the Lord. Each Gospel of the Four gives us a careful account, down to the details, of His funeral. St Paul expressly refers to it...when he sums up his 'Gospel' to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 4). The Apostles' Creed, and again the Nicene Creed (I use the common names of those two precious confession of the Church's faith), both expressly recite that He was buried. Undoubtedly the main reason of this lies in the fact that the Burial put an authoritative seal, so to speak, upon the Death, and thus accentuated the supreme event of the Resurrection. The grave of Joseph did not indeed logically prove that the Lamb, on the 'green hill' just above it, had veritably died; for the living have been buried by misadventure [accident]. But at least it threw the otherwise provable death into a solemn public prominence; it announced it as absolutely complete. So when, on the next day but one [i.e. on the third day], then and there, that grave was found empty; when friends and adversaries alike, watching each other, looked in vain for the linen-wound Body; the Resurrection was fully evidenced to be no mere fancy, raised by an impression of uncertain causes on excitable emotions; nor again any mere putting forth, however wonderfully, of a spiritual but disembodied force. It was the triumph of the Lord's whole Being over death. His body had been placed within the clasp of the grave. And His Body no more than His Soul was left within it. But also in a way most precious, while subsidiary, the Burial of the Lord claims its place in the Bible and the Creeds as a fact of tenderest application to the suffering heart. Do you know what it is to stand, or sit, or kneel, heart-stricken, beside some mounded spot of green earth, unutterably dear? More mournful still, is it yours to be far away from it, perhaps separated from it by lands and seas, while you carry ever within you the consciousness that there it is – the grave, the silent holder of all that remains below of that beloved presence? Ah, let us speak reverently of such griefs. But let us meet them always, persistently, with the Lord Jesus, and His burial. He died for us; there is our peace with God. He rose from death, and is alive for ever-more; there is our eternal certainty that we live, and shall live, with Him, 'in the power of an endless life.' But also, between the two, He was buried. So that dread thing, the grave, is itself transfigured. Not only will it be grand, one wonderful day, to have done with it for ever, and to inhabit that great City which needs no cemetery, the heavenly Jerusalem; but even now, while the grave lasts, it is altered, it is transfigured, because in it the silent Lord, in the reality of His human death, lay before us. [Does not God tell us in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new!"] I love to think of every Christian churchyard, every Christian grave, as linked spiritually to Joseph's garden; a sort of extension of it, so that as it were the Lord's sepulcher – now open to the eternal day – is

always one among the sepulchers of His people. I have tried to put it thus in simple verse:

There is one resting-place, and only one,
For those who fall asleep in God's dear Son.
To our weak thought indeed and sense's eye
Far distant each from each may seem to lie;
By Thames, by Nile, or on the silent breast
Of ancient China softly laid to rest.
But faith and spirit see them, each and all,
Carried to one green spot for burial,
Where erst, unconscious of its glorious doom,
Arimathea Joseph carved his tomb,
And fenced the ground with marble in, and bade
Cypress and olive weave a glimmering shade.
There soon he bore his Savior, newly slain,
And there the sleeping Christ arose again,
And trod the paths in victory serene,
And turn'd to heaven the grief of Magdalene.
He now, from every land and every deep,
Brings His beloved there, and gives them sleep,
Still gather'd up in peace, while ages run;
A countless host, and yet in Him but one.
There, seal'd awhile, now open, the holy cell,
Where folded grave clothes lie, where angels dwell,
Assures the mourner of His life and power
Who for His saints prepares their rising-hour.
And He meantime, in glory and in grace,
Immortal Gardener of the flowery place,
Walks 'midst His people's tombs, and all the while
His eyes, so wet of old, foreseeing, smile." [75]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION # 17: The burial is not good news.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #17: This objection has been made by another groundless gospel advocate besides Pastor Reehoff. Tom Stegall writes that "by itself, it is not 'good news' to state that a man was buried". [76] Notice that Stegall makes a point to say "by itself..." And so in discussing this objection it's important to remember

that we're not talking about death per se, we're talking about *burial*. There is already a dead body; now then, is it good to bury the corpse or not?

Pastor Reehoff and other groundless gospel people go so far as to say that *burial* is not good news. Apparently, it's not good news that God buried His Son as the Scriptures foretold. (See, for example: Deut. 21:22-23; Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60; Jn. 19:38-42, etc.). Would they rather give Jesus "the burial of an ass" (Jer. 22:19, KJV), in other words, *no* burial?

Groundless gospel people say the burial is not good news when, in fact, according to the Bible, the opposite is true. It's not good news to deprive someone of burial! The Bible says, "A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he" (Eccl. 6:3, NIV). In the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Dr. Joe Haag affirms, "To allow a body to decay or be desecrated above the ground was highly dishonorable (1 Kings 14:10-14; 2 Kings 9:34-37), and any corpse found by the wayside was required to be buried (2 Sam. 21:10-14).^[77] Charles Taylor concurs and says: "The Hebrews were, at all times, very careful in the burial of their dead; to be deprived of burial, was thought one of the greatest dishonors, or causes of unhappiness, that could befall any man; (Eccl. 6:3.)...and the souls of such persons were believed to be plunged into hell."^[78] Theologian Nathaniel Micklem similarly writes: "If a man's body was unburied, he could not rest in Sheol; to lack burial, therefore, was the most cruel fate."^[79]

The Bible makes it very clear that it is a kind and good act to bury a dead person. We see in the book of Genesis that Abraham buried his beloved wife (Gen. 23:3-20). In the book of Hebrews, Joseph is praised as a man of faith for he "made mention of the departure of the children of Israel [out of Egypt], giving instructions concerning his bones" to be buried in the Promised Land (Heb. 11:22). David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), said to the men of Jabesh-Gilead who buried Saul: "*You are blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him. And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing.*" (2 Sam. 2:4-6) Of course, kindness is the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness" (Gal. 5:22).

More examples from the Bible could be cited. In 2 Chronicles 32:33 we read that "Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death" (KJV). After John the Baptist was beheaded, "his disciples came and took away the body and buried it" (Matt. 14:12). And similarly, after the church's first martyr was stoned to death by the unbelieving Jews, the Bible says that "Godly men buried Stephen" (Acts 8:2, NIV). The Bible likewise indicates that Jesus was buried not as a punishment but as an honor: "They intended to bury him with criminals, but he ended up

in a rich man's tomb, because he had committed no violent deeds, nor had he spoken deceitfully" (Isa. 53:9, NET Bible). The Apostle Paul corroborates this in Acts 13:29 when he says that "they took him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb." The Greek word for "tomb" is *mnēmeion* which literally means "memorial".[80] And so we see that the Lord Jesus is honored with a decent burial in a rich man's tomb.

When Pastor Reehoff says that the burial is not good news, he is isolating Christ's burial apart from the other facts of the Gospel (see, for example: Acts 13:26-41; 1 Cor. 15:1-5, etc.). But that won't do because as the saying goes, "A text without a context is a pretext." Christ's burial is stated in the context of the Gospel and in the context of the Scriptures. Concerning the latter, the burial of Christ is a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies such as Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (cf. Gal. 3:13), Psalm 16:10-11 (cf. Acts 2:25-28) and Isaiah 53:9 (cf. Matt. 27:57-60). Thus we can say, it's good news that the Scriptures have been fulfilled! More pointedly, Jesus' own words in Matthew 12:38-41 find their fulfillment in the Gospel: Good News! And it's good news that in the grave Jesus' body would "not see corruption" – His body would not undergo decay (see Psa. 16:10b; cf. Acts 2:27b). Bengel affirms: "The grave was to Him not the destined receptacle of corruption, but an apartment fitted for entering into life (Acts 2:26-28)."[81] Furthermore, (as Bengel noted) the prophecies of Christ's burial anticipate His resurrection (see, for example: Psa. 16:10-11; Isa. 53:9-10; Matt. 12:38-41, etc.). Again, how is that not good news? It is good news! Furthermore, it is good news that Jesus was given an honorable burial with the rich "because He had done no violence nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (Isa. 53:9). Jesus was given an honorable burial because He was and is worthy of it! How is that not good news? It is good news! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Someone might object, "It's not good news because He died." Well, that proves my point then doesn't it – that someone could argue that the death of Christ is not good news but it's still included in the Gospel. These groundless gospel people have a double standard because they are *not* being consistent in their reasoning in regards to the death and burial of Christ. They are *not* applying their reductionist reasoning consistently to both the death and the burial of Christ. They are oftentimes, as in this instance, applying their reductionist reasoning to the burial of Christ but not to the fact of the death of Christ. The truth is, both Christ's death and His burial are part of the Good News and must be understood in that context, not in isolation from it.

If the burial of Christ is not good news, why does the apostle Paul specifically include it in his "good news" in Acts 13:29 and 1 Corinthians 15:4? The answer of course is that Christ's burial is, in fact, good news!

Pastor Reehoff's contention that the burial is not good news reminds me of the charade of Calvinism. The Bible says that Christ died for the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). But Calvinism says that He really didn't die for everyone. And so they say in a way He did

die for everyone but in a way He didn't die for everyone. And so it's double-talk. Is the Gospel a farce in which God on the one hand includes Christ's burial in the Good News but on the other hand excludes it? Is God guilty of pretense and deceit in giving us the Gospel? Or is God somehow unclear and vague about the facts? By no means! See, for example: Col. 4:4; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 4:2.

In conclusion to this whole discussion, the words of Dr. Norman Geisler are appropriate when he says: "**Jesus' Burial Was According to the Gospel.** Paul used Jesus' burial as part of the Gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15. Burial is an essential part of 'the gospel' since Paul defined the 'gospel' as involving death, burial, and resurrection appearances." [82]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #18: The burial of Christ is not mentioned that much.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #18: Christian theologian and author H. G. C. Moule highlights the proper perspective when he writes: "MUCH emphasis is laid in Scripture, and also in the great Creeds of the Church, upon the Burial of the Lord. Each Gospel of the Four gives us a careful account, down to the details, of His funeral. St Paul expressly refers to it...when he sums up his 'Gospel' to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 4)." [83]

It is amazing that in such a short creed as the one St. Paul recites in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, mention is made of Christ's burial. In other words, in a creed where words are used sparingly, where whole areas of doctrine are either assumed or passed over in silence, where the bulk of Christ's earthly ministry, His teachings and His miracles are not even mentioned, specific mention is made of His burial. This is hugely significant! And furthermore, let us now look at the later Gospel narratives. Each of these four also includes in their narratives the events and details of Christ's burial. Whoever says that Christ's burial is not mentioned that much is really not being honest with the Scriptures.

What about in prophecy? Is Christ's burial mentioned in the Old Testament? It most certainly is! Take a look at Isaiah 53:9. Other passages in the Old Testament could also be cited, such as Psalm 16:10-11, Psalm 22:1-22, and Psalm 40:1-17. Concerning the latter, Dr. Scofield writes: "The 40th Psalm speaks of Messiah, Jehovah's Servant, obedient unto death. The Psalm begins with the joy of Christ in resurrection (vs. 1, 2). He has been in the horrible pit of the grave, but has been brought up. Verses 3-5 are His resurrection testimony, His 'new song.' Verses 6 and 7 are retrospective. When sacrifice and offering had become abominable because of the wickedness of the people (Isa. 1:10-15), then the obedient Servant came to make the pure offering (vs. 7-17; Heb. 10:5-17)." [84]

But how many times does the burial of Christ have to be mentioned before it becomes part of the Gospel according to Reehoff? Not surprisingly, he never says!

Reehoff's statement smacks of (i.e. seems to have the characteristics of) Roman Catholicism and high-minded Popishness because he's saying that he doesn't think Christ's burial is mentioned enough to be part of the Gospel when in fact the Bible never makes that a requirement. Reehoff is, in effect, measuring the yardstick by the cloth (to borrow the metaphor from William Tyndale) – and of course that's backwards! If God says something even one time in the Bible – it's true! As the old saying goes, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it!" The Psalmist says of the Lord God, "All your words are true" (Psa. 119:160). And the apostle Paul says in Romans 3:4, "Let God be true and every man a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.'" And of course, as I have already pointed out, Christ's burial is mentioned as part of the Gospel not just one time in the Bible but actually a number of times in the Scriptures.

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #19: The burial of Christ is not mentioned as much as His death and resurrection.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #19: But similarly, we could say that the resurrection of Christ is not mentioned as much as His death. So are we to assume that Christ's resurrection is not part of the Gospel because it isn't mentioned as much as His death? No, of course not. But this is the reductionist reasoning of groundless gospel advocates when it comes to the burial of Christ. They are not consistent with their reasoning because they have a theological presupposition that the burial of Christ is not part of the Gospel. If they were consistent they would say, "Neither the burial nor the resurrection are not mentioned as much as Christ's death, but both are still elements of the Gospel." [85]

GROUNDLESS OBJECTION #20: You are isolating yourself from the world.

ANSWER TO OBJECTION #20: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10-11; cf. 1 Thess. 2:4). And doesn't the Bible say in Matthew 3:3 that John the Baptist was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the LORD! Make His paths straight!'" May I say, let's make the Gospel straight! I hear a lot of catchy sermons today: "The Gospel in 25 Words," "The Gospel in 10 Words," "The Gospel in 8 Words," "The Gospel in One Minute," – okay, what about *The Gospel in the Bible*? In 1 Corinthians 15, God has already given us the Gospel: "the full content of the New Testament gospel – including the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ." [86] God said it, I believe it, and that settles it! The late Baptist preacher Adrian Rogers has well said: "We need people to stand up and say, '*Thus saith the Lord!*'" [87]

Furthermore, the Bible says that “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Remember the Old Testament account of Elijah the prophet? He thought he was the only true prophet of God in Israel, but God told him that there were still 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And so even if we think we’re the only ones preaching the truth, there are others out there preaching it too.

The truth is, the orthodox view of the Gospel is not Pastor Reehoff’s groundless interpretation of it! Scot McKnight, a New Testament scholar and historian of early Christianity, has well said: “The foundation for Christian orthodoxy is 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 (most folks say 15:1-4, but I’m not sure that is the most natural of stopping points): 1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.’ I want to make a few observations....First, the gospel is a narration of the saving events in the life of Jesus as they bring to fulfillment the Scriptures of Israel. Second, the events in Jesus’ life are his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection and his appearances. Third, this narrative forms the basis for salvation, understood here to include the forgiveness of sins. These events accomplish that salvation and the gospel therefore involves the appeal to believe in God’s redemption through these events. Fourth, all of the early articulations of ‘orthodoxy’ — from the *The Apostolic Tradition* (Hippolytus of Rome) to Nicea to Chalcedon — are elaborations of this narrative. Fifth, orthodoxy, then, in spite of the yacking of some today, is not speculative theology drawn simply from current philosophical debates but elaborations of the gospel, often in response to threats to that gospel. Sixth, what is at stake in denying orthodoxy is not simply the ‘right ideas’ or ‘quaint’ ideas but the gospel itself. That which threatens the gospel is articulated by those who are most concerned with the gospel. Seventh, theology that is done without the framing of the gospel narration of 1 Cor 15 is not gospel orthodoxy. In other words, orthodoxy is the faithful unfolding of that original gospel narrative of 1 Cor 15 and orthodoxy is faithfulness as well to the major unfolding of that gospel, including such things as the Apostles’ Creed, Nicea, Chalcedon, and the fundamental insights of the Reformation’s *solas* as they seek to elaborate the gospel narration.”[88] Similarly, in the book *Walvoord: A Tribute*, Dr. John Reed of Dallas Theological Seminary affirms: “Throughout the history of the church the biblical definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 has been the accepted view.”[89] This “has been the faith of martyrs and missionaries and is the core of evangelical preaching.”[90]

ENDNOTES:

[1] This is my personal translation of 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 from the Greek New Testament. One of the things I found very interesting when I translated the Greek text of this passage into English was that there is an interrogative pronoun (*tini* with the acute accent on the first vowel) in verse 2 that most English translations don't translate, at least not as a question. But the apostle Paul is asking the Corinthians a question about the Gospel. *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* affirms that in 1 Corinthians 15:2 the apostle Paul is asking the Corinthians a question. It translates the Greek text of verse 2 this way: "In what word (I ask) did I preach (it) to you? – (you will remember) if you are holding (it) fast! – unless you believed idly!" (See W. R. Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, 5 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 919.) And so Paul is basically asking the Corinthians: What have I preached to you? What is the good news I preached to you? Then Paul proceeds to remind the Corinthians (and us today) of what the Gospel really is.

[2] New Testament Greek scholar Dr. Spiros Zodhiates affirms that "Paul wrote these statements about twenty-five years after the crucifixion and before any of the Gospel narratives were written. The authorship and date of First Corinthians are among the least disputed of the books of the New Testament. What we find reflected here is the state of things around A.D. 55." (Zodhiates, *Conquering the Fear of Death in View of the Empty Tomb* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970], p. 61.)

[3] Robertson, *The Minister and His Greek New Testament*, p. 101, underlining added.

[4] Although I don't agree with John MacArthur on his view of Lordship Salvation, I agree with him when he says that in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 the apostle Paul lists the facts of the Gospel. For those Free Grace people who may feel uncomfortable about agreeing with MacArthur on the facts of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, let me ask a logical question: should we reject dispensationalism because MacArthur holds to a dispensational theology? No, of course not. We believe in dispensationalism not because that's what MacArthur teaches, but because that's what the Bible teaches. It just so happens that on these two subjects (the definition of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 and dispensationalism) we happen to agree with MacArthur - or if you want to put it the other way around, he happens to agree with us, or more accurately we all agree with the Bible.

[5] MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Paul* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2017), pp. 9, 22, underlining added.

[6] William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008), p. 363, italics and brackets his, underlining added.

[7] William Lane Craig, "Doctrine of Christ (Part 14), The Work of Christ – His Resurrection," *Reasonable Faith with William Lane Craig* website, <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/defenders-2-podcast/transcript/s6-14> (accessed March 24, 2014), underlining added.

[8] Robertson, "The Minister And His Greek New Testament," *The Biblical Review* (New York: Bible Teachers Training School, 1919): 4:113.

[9] Johnson, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1255.

[10] Charles R. Swindoll, General Editor, Don Campbell, Wendell Johnston, John Walvoord, John Witmer, *The Theological Wordbook* [Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000], "Foreword," p. xi.

[11] Donald K. Campbell is currently president emeritus of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) and professor emeritus of Bible Exposition. He has served over 50 years at DTS. In addition, he has served on the boards of numerous evangelical ministries, schools, mission agencies; has written a number of books and contributed to numerous articles and book reviews in theological journals, especially *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

[12] Donald K. Campbell ("DKC"), *The Theological Wordbook*, p. 142.

[13] Pastor Jim Scudder Jr., "The Gospel in 8 Words," 1 Corinthians 15:1-7 (June 14, 2015). Unfortunately, Pastor Jim Scudder Jr.'s "Gospel in 8 Words" omits Christ's burial and resurrection appearances. Even the references to "the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) are excluded from his mini-gospel! What I'm saying is that Pastor Jim Scudder Jr.'s "Gospel in 8 Words" is a partial Gospel – it's not the whole Gospel. New Testament Greek scholar Henry Alford writes (quoting 1 Corinthians 15:1): "**I declare...the (whole) Gospel:** not merely the Death and Resurrection of Christ, which were *en protois* [priority] parts of it". (Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 602, bold his, ellipsis added; cf. Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, 2 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 229.) Darrel Bock (research professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary) affirms: "In fact, only to speak of Jesus dying for sin – even to speak of Jesus dying for sin and rising again – is to give only about half of the gospel message....Paul in 1 Cor 15:3-5 summarizes the gospel as the fact that Jesus 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas.'" (Bock, *Recovering the*

Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News [Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2010], p. 3, italics his, ellipsis added; cf. Bock, *The Bible Knowledge Word Study: Acts – Ephesians* [Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2006], pp. 310-311.)

In spite of Pastor Scudder Jr.'s groundless gospel, the point I'm making in response to Reehoff's objection is that even Pastor Scudder agrees that the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 is the message of salvation, i.e. the saving message.

[14] Newell, *Romans Verse-By-Verse* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994), pp. 18-19, ellipsis his. NOTE: This book was originally published in Chicago by Moody Press, 1938.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 19, capitalization and italics his.

[16] Rokser, *Let's Preach the Gospel* (Duluth: Duluth Bible Church), p. 23.

[17] Johnson, Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, Editors, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), p. 1255.

[18] Zane Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981), pp. 91-92, first and second brackets added. In regards to Hodges' exegetical insights on 1 Corinthians 15:2, I'm in agreement with another Free Grace advocate who said: "My opinion is that Zane Hodges explained 1 Cor. 15:2 exceedingly well, evidently before he changed his mind about the gospel." (Art, comment under the post "1 Corinthians 15," *Rose's Reasonings* blog, March 28, 2008, <http://rosesreasonings.blogspot.com/2008/03/1-corinthians-15.html#c5057204266597401204> (accessed October 13, 2017).

[19] Stegall, "The Tragedy of the Crossless Gospel Pt. 9," *The Grace Family Journal* (Special Edition 2008): p. 8.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[21] *Ibid.* p. 9, italics his.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[23] Lockyer, *All The Books And Chapter Of The Bible*, p. 173.

[24] For more information see my article: "The Romans Road Leads to Isaiah 53," *Free Grace Free Speech* blog.

[25] Newell, "GALATIANS 1 and 2, or Paul's Defense of His Gospel," p. 8.
<http://www.4himnet.com/bnyberg/Pauls%20Defense%20of%20His%20Gospel%20-%20Newell.pdf>

[26] Walter Martin, "Walter Martin's last TBN Appearance – Part 3 of 5" [time stamp: 8:15], YouTube.

[27] Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1931), 6 Vols., Vol. 4, pp. 186-187.

[28] Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Commentary on Romans 2:16.

[29] Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), p. 115, italics his.

[30] Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link In Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1989), pp. 590-591, italics his.

[31] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 727, italics his.

[32] Quoted by Dr. C. I. Scofield in the "Introduction" to *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909, 1917), p. iii.

[33] Robertson, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning God the Father*, p. 141.

[34] Jim Scudder Jr. and Phil Stringer, *Evangelism Made Simple* (Lake Zurich: Victory in Grace, 2016), italics and ellipsis his, except for the first ellipsis which has been added.

[35] Rokser, *Seven Key Questions About Water Baptism* (Duluth: Duluth Bible Church), p. 5.

[36] David Jeremiah, *Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2002), pg. 277.

[37] See my articles: "The Historical Credibility of the Gospel" (= "A Brief History of the Biblical Gospel"), and "Getting the Gospel Right".

[38] The word “dispensation” is a Biblical word (see 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10, 3:2, 3:9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4). The Greek word is *oikonomia*.

[39] Habermas, “The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus,” *4truth.net* website, <http://www.4truth.net/fourtruthpbjesus.aspx?pageid=8589952867> (accessed April 1, 2012).

[40] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 271, italics his. In a twist of irony, Stegall actually bears witness against the groundless gospel position when he says that “some Christians [like J. B. Hixson, *Getting the Gospel Wrong*, first edition, p. 80] insist...that a lost person can be saved by believing only part of the gospel. But Scripture nowhere endorses such a possibility. In the Bible, people are never said to be saved by believing ‘part of’ the gospel but only by believing ‘the gospel.’ According to the New Testament, people either believe the gospel or they don’t. To reject it in part is to reject it in whole.” (Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, pp. 563-564, italics his.)

[41] For further discussion on the content clause and the content of the Gospel, see my article “Getting the Gospel Right,” pp. 3-4 in the PDF format.

[42] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 587.

[43] Dennis Rokser, *Seven Key Questions About Water Baptism* (Duluth: Duluth Bible Church), p. 5.

[44] Rick Whitmire, co-founder of Grace Biblical Seminary (a Free Grace seminary in McDonough, Georgia) affirms: “Romans 1:16 – ‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the (Gentiles).’...The Apostle Paul Defines the Gospel: 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 – ‘For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ DIED for our sins according to the scriptures: And that He was BURED, and that He ROSE again the third day according to the scripture: And that He was SEEN...’ The apostle Paul summarizes the most basic ingredients of the gospel message, namely, the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of the resurrected Christ. a. This is the one place where the historical elements of the gospel are clearly defined. Our responsibility is to make the gospel clear and Biblical. But in order to do so, we must have a clear understanding of what the gospel means in the New Testament. These verses, give us the heart of the gospel. Note the four clauses introduced in verses 3-5. b. The Apostle Paul in defining the gospel uses four verbs: 1). Christ Died....2). Christ was Buried....3). Christ Rose....4). Christ was Seen.” (Whitmire, “The Facts Presentation,” GO Tell EVANGELISM, CHAPTER 2, OUR WITNESS FOR CHRIST

[dated "07-15-03"], underlining, capitalization, and second ellipsis his, http://tgcministry.com/gotell/gts_2.htm [accessed April 5, 2012]. NOTE: In the original article much of Whitmire's statement is in bold print.)

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson has made a similar statement to Whitmire (concerning Rom. 1:16 and 1 Cor. 15:1-5). S. Lewis Johnson remarks: "[In Romans 1:16] The apostle does not set forth the details of his 'gospel.' The interpreter, however, is upon reasonably safe ground in assuming that they are found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. The gospel is the good news of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances, together with the apostolic explanation of the doctrinal significance of these great facts." (S. Lewis Johnson, "The Gospel Paul Preached," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 [October 1971]: p. 330.)

Free Grace theologian William R. Newell also looks back to 1 Corinthians 15 to define the Gospel in the book of Romans (see Newell, *Romans Verse-By-Verse*, pp. 6, 20, 24, etc.).

[45] Scofield, *What Do the Prophets Say?*, pp. 57-58.

[46] In the footnotes to Psalm 40 in *The Scofield Reference Bible*, Dr. C. I. Scofield writes: "The 40th Psalm speaks of Messiah, Jehovah's Servant, obedient unto death. The Psalm begins with the joy of Christ in resurrection (vs. 1, 2). He has been in the horrible pit of the grave, but has been brought up. Verses 3-5 are His resurrection testimony, His 'new song.' Verses 6 and 7 are retrospective. When sacrifice and offering had become abominable because of the wickedness of the people (Isa. 1:10-15), then the obedient Servant came to make the pure offering (vs. 7-17; Heb. 10:5-17). See Psalm 41., next in order of the Messianic Psalms." (Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* [1909], p. 618, note 1.)

[47] Walter Martin, "Dr. Walter Martin – Kingdom of the Cults Part 1/7 – Introduction to the Cults" (time stamp approx. 22:00 - 25:30 min.), YouTube.

[48] Augustine, Sermon 362, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," Edmund Hill and John E. Rotelle, Editors, Augustinian Heritage Institute, *The Works of Saint Augustine* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 3 Parts, 10 Vols., Part 3, Vol. 10, p. 250. Concerning Augustine, J. Vernon McGee writes: "Augustine is one of the great men who has affected the church and the world. Both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism quote him to sustain their positions." (McGee, *Witnesses: After He Died They Saw Him Alive* [Pasadena: Thru the Bible Radio Network], p. 13.)

[49] W. Harold Mare, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 12 Vols., Vol. 10, p. 282.

[50] Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909, 1917), p. 943.

[51] Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 181.

[52] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 727, italics his.

[53] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ* (Milwaukee, Grace Gospel Press, 2009), p. 577.

[54] Meisinger, "The Gospel Paul Preached: A Church Age Model of Evangelistic Content," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* (2009): pp. 12-13, ellipsis added.

[55] Bruce, "When is a Gospel Not a Gospel?" *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 45.2 (March 1963): p. 324,
http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bjrl/gospel_bruce.pdf. NOTE: The reference to 1 Cor. 15:3ff is cited in the footnotes.

[56] Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), pp. 102-103.

[57] Habermas, "The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus," *4truth.net* website, <http://www.4truth.net/fourtruthpbjesus.aspx?pageid=8589952867> (accessed April 1, 2012).

[58] Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 739.

[59] Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, "Christian Burial: A Case for Burial," *Christian Research Journal*.

[60] Semantics is the study of the meaning of language, such as the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, or text.

[61] Wiersbe, "Sanctified By Correction," *2ProphetU* website (accessed November 9, 2011).

[62] Robertson, *The Minister's Greek Testament*, p. 118.

[63] Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, pp. 19-21.

[64] Bing, "So Great Salvation," BOOK REVIEWS, *The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, www.faithalone.org.

[65] Ashbrook, *Axioms of Separation*, p. 27.

[66] Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 11.

[67] Ironside, *Studies on Book One of the Psalms*, p. 64.

[68] Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1228.

[69] Zodhiates, *Conquering the Fear of Death in View of the Empty Tomb*, pp. 775-776, italics his. Zodhiates goes on to write: "Paul does not deal with *hadees*, which in other books of the New Testament is presented as the dwelling place to which men's disembodied spirits went. It would have been contrary to the whole trend of his argument in 1 Corinthians 15 for him to speak of *hadees* as an enemy, for he does not deal with the period preceding the resurrection of Christ, when the spirits of believers and unbelievers went to *hadees*. (Luke 16:19ff indicates that Abraham's bosom was the designation of the place in *hadees* to which the spirit of righteous Lazarus went, and the place of torment in *hadees* was where the unrighteous rich man was consigned.)

After the resurrection of Christ, believers are never referred to as going to *hadees*, but as going to be with Christ (Acts 7:59, Phil. 1:23, Heb. 12:23). And Christ is in heaven (Mark 16:19, Luke 21:54, Acts 1:9, Heb. 4:14, 1 Pet. 3:22). Death is still an enemy of the Christian, for he still experiences it; but *hadees* is not, for the Christian does not go there. And it is with the external destiny of the Christian that Paul is primarily concerned in 1 Corinthians 15. His subject is the resurrection of the body, not the place where the soul dwells when disembodied." (Ibid., p. 775, italics his.)

[70] Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1966), pp. 187-188, ellipsis added, italics his.

[71] Ironside, *Death and Afterward*, p. 25.

[72] Newell, *The Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 380. NOTE: This book was originally published in 1935.

[73] Newell, *Romans Verse-By-Verse*, p. 397.

[74] Robertson, *The Christ of the Logia*, p. 224. Elsewhere, Robertson writes: "One must always honor Joseph of Arimathea, though timid till now, for his courage and love in asking Pilate for the body of Jesus to be placed in his new tomb. Nicodemus and Joseph buried his body, wrapped in myrrh and aloes, with tender love." (Robertson, *Studies in the New Testament* [Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1915], p. 115.)

[75] Moule, "CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S," *From Sunday To Sunday: Short Bible Readings for the Sundays of the Year* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1904), pp. 194-198.

[76] Tom Stegall says, "by itself, it is not 'good news' to state that a man was buried, for that is a sad, daily occurrence in our fallen world." (Stegall, *The Gospel Of The Christ*, p. 585.)

[77] Joe Haag, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), p. 243.

[78] Edward Robinson, Editor, Augustin Calmet, *Calmet's Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1832), p. 214.

[79] Micklem, Frederick Carl Eiselen, Edwin Lewis, and David G. Downey, Editors, *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1929), p. 410.

[80] New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson writes: "Tomb (*mnēmeion*). Memorial, common in the Gospels." (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Commentary on Acts 13:29.)

[81] Cited by Fausset in Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Glasgow: William Collins, Queen's Printer, 1863), p. 307.

[82] Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, "Christian Burial: A Case for Burial," *Christian Research Journal*, bold his.

[83] Moule, "CHRIST'S GRAVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S," *From Sunday To Sunday: Short Bible Readings for the Sundays of the Year* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1904), p. 194.

[84] Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), p. 618, note 1.

[85] By the way, Stegall's false dichotomy between "the Elements vs. Evidences of the Gospel" (Stegall, *The Gospel Should Be Sliced*, p. 555) is a wild goose chase because, according to the Bible, each of the four elements listed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 is also an evidence of something else. In other words, all four elements (i.e. all four of the facts in 1 Cor. 15:3-5) are also evidences. All four statements in 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 are proofs. Notice:

1. Christ's death is proof of His love (Jn. 15:13; Rom. 5:8),
2. Christ's burial is proof of His sinless perfection (Isa. 53:9; 1 Pet. 2:22-23),
3. Christ's resurrection is proof of His deity (Acts 17:31; Rom. 1:4),
4. Christ's manifestation is proof of His bodily resurrection (Lk. 24:39; Acts 1:3).

Why is this important? It's important because Stegall's "Elements vs. Evidences" argument is one of the favorite talking points of groundless gospel advocates. Their mantra goes something like this: "The burial of Christ is only a proof, it's not really part of the Gospel." In other words, they think Christ's burial is "only a proof" of the Gospel - according to them it's not really part of the Gospel itself.

The truth is, if groundless gospel advocates were consistent with their reductionist reasoning, they would have no gospel because each element of the Biblical Gospel is a proof or evidence of something else (as I noted above). For example, the resurrection of Jesus is said to be "proof" that He is God (Acts 17:16-31; Rom. 1:1-4). So is the resurrection of Christ not part of the Gospel because the Bible says it's a "proof"? Well, of course not. Such reasoning is not true in regards to Christ's resurrection nor is it true in regards to Christ's burial. Both are evidences yet nonetheless still elements of the Gospel. And so we see (to use another metaphor) "the proof is in the pudding" so to speak. In other words, the proof is in the Gospel!

[86] Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 4 Vols., Vol. 3, p. 549.

[87] WVCY radio sermon, Sunday, November 30, 2014.

[88] McKnight, "The Gospel and Orthodoxy," *Jesus Creed* blog, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/jesuscreed/2009/02/the-gospel-and-orthodoxy.html> (or, <http://www.patheos.com/community/jesuscreed/2009/02/05/the-gospel-and-orthodoxy/>), February 5, 2009, bold his, ellipsis added.

[89] Reed, Donald K. Campbell, Editor, *Walvoord: A Tribute* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 274. Dr. Reed is currently the Senior Professor Emeritus of Pastor Ministries and Director Emeritus of the D. Min. Program at DTS.

[90] Merrill C. Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 105, cf. pp. 44, 69, 154. The late Merrill C. Tenney was Dean of the Graduate School, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

Posted by Jonathan Perreault