



# PREPARING TO STAND

EXTRA #1 — May 2008

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-05

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## Harmony by Jim Buller

At the end of creation week, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." Genesis 1:31. All things throughout the entire world were in harmony with each other and with God. "For God is not the author of disorder but of peace." 1 Corinthians 14:33 margin.

But, Satan tempted Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If she ate the fruit, He told her, "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:5. *She* could be like God, choosing right and wrong for herself. This same idea had been a key element in Satan's own fall. For he had said, "I will be like the Most High." Isaiah 14:14. Unfortunately, like Satan, Adam and Eve chose to be their own "god," deciding for themselves what they should do, or not do; and so the global harmony God had created did not last.

And ever since then, to one extent or another, the whole human race has been infected with this same notion —that we don't need God to tell us what to do, *we* can decide what is best for ourselves. Today we still hear and yield to the same tempting message that says: "You're intelligent. You're the one who really knows what is best for *yourself*. So, to find the most fulfillment in *your* life, just follow your heart." In other words, since *you* are the only one who *really* knows what would be good or bad for yourself, *you* are the one that can do the best job at directing your own life.

But, what has been the result of everyone choosing what is right and wrong for themselves? To illustrate the point here, think for a moment what would happen if each member of a choir started singing whatever song they thought would be best. Or suppose somehow they all decided to sing the same song, but each person decided when they should start singing, which key, and what rhythm would be best. What would be the result? —confusion!

To avoid this confusion we have a song leader or director to start everyone off on the same song, at the same time, in the same key, and with the same rhythm. The results of everyone working together, is beautiful and harmonious. To make this happen the song leader does not have to be a bossy tyrant, and the choir members do not have to be slaves without any mind of their own. But, for everyone and everything

to work together there needs to be (1) someone to organize things, to "direct traffic" so to speak, and (2) everyone else involved must be willing to cooperate, and follow the director's leading.

So, who is best qualified to be the "director" for the universe? The obvious answer is God. This then brings us to *the* central question. "Is God *really* organizing and directing things for our best good?" Or, to personalize the issue, "Can I trust God to do what is best for *me*?"

The choice that Eve was faced with at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil centered around this same question. She had to choose. Was she going to trust and follow God, or was she going to direct her own life, and do things her own way. And each of us today are still faced with this same basic choice —are we going to trust and follow God, or are we going to follow our own hearts and minds?

To help answer this question, we need to look at what God's overall organizational plan. In John 15:4-5, Jesus says, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Using the grape vine as an example, Jesus said that as a result of being connected with Him, that is, relying on His wisdom, trusting His provision and following His plan, we would "bear much fruit." But what does He mean by "bearing fruit?"

Let's think like a botanist for a minute, and analyze what the different parts of a plant do for the plant. Looking at each part should help us understanding why it is both interesting and significant that Jesus chose "fruit" to illustrate His point. For the sake of simplicity, we will generalize plant parts to: roots, stems, leaves, and flowers/fruit. Roots provide support, and gather in water and soil nutrients. Stems give the plant a frame work, and have vascular tissue which carries the water and nutrients around to the whole plant. Leaves, through the process of photosynthesis, use sunlight energy to turn water and carbon dioxide into sugar, making food for the plant. The roots, stems and leaves all perform important functions for the plant. Without any one of these, the plant would die. So, what does fruit do for the plant it is growing on? —Nothing.

The reason Jesus chose "fruit" to illustrate the result of being connected with Him is because "fruit" is something the plant does, not for itself, but to benefit other things. Fruit is food for birds and animals. Fruit contains the seeds to start new plants. Fruit even benefits non-living things such as the soil that it enriches when it falls to the ground and decomposes. Fruit then, represents things that are done, not for ourselves, but for others.

It is also worth noting that most plants put their whole life energy into bearing fruit. Take a tomato plant for instance. Suppose we were to compared the weight of the tomato plant itself, with the weight of all the tomatoes it produced in its lifetime. Which would weigh more? —the tomatoes! This would definitely be true of watermelons, and fruit trees too! Other plants, the annual grain grasses in particular, *die* once they have produced their "fruit." They pour their whole life energy into producing "fruit," something that does nothing for themselves. They *live* for the sole purpose of benefitting others. To the selfish way of thinking this may not make sense. But the Creator made plants to

be this way, and in spite of the effects of sin in this world, plants still give us an excellent illustration of God's plan for all His creations.

Before we go any further though, there is another important point in John 15:4-5 that we also need to emphasize. Let's read it again. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Fruit is borne *only* on a branch that is attached to the vine. If a branch is disconnected from the vine, it withers up and dies, (see John 15:6). Therefore, we are not expected to try to "bear fruit," or benefit others, on our own. We can only give to others as a result of being connected to *The Source* of all benefit —the Creator Himself. (See Colossians 1:16.)

God created everything in the universe so that as it received from Him, The Source of all good things, (see James 1:17,) it would be able to "bear" some kind of "fruit" —that is, it would pass along some benefit to the other things around it. Because it had "freely received" from Him, it would be able to "freely give" to others, (see Matthew 10:8). In nature we find that all things, both living and non-living exists for the purpose of benefitting others. Sunlight, air, water, dirt and rocks all benefit other things. Blessings from God are passed on from one created thing to another. Each thing receives what it needs and produces something that is useful to other things. For example, plants receive the soil nutrients and sunlight energy that animals can not readily make use of, and produce fruits and vegetables which animals can use for food. The animals in turn, do things to benefit plants, such as spreading seeds, fertilizing, thinning and pruning.

God created the whole universe to be a huge interconnected network of benefit sharing. Instead of each thing just looking out for itself, everything exists to benefit others. Thus the needs of each are met by the abundant sharing of all the other things around it. This is God's overall organizational plan, and everything in the universe follows this plan —everything, except for demons and selfish humans.

Our lives, therefore, will have the greatest fulfillment when we occupy the position God has for us in His network. Because *then*, we will be in the right place, at the right time, to receive all the blessings He sends our way; and, we will also be able to pass on all the benefits He has planned for us to give to others. Only the Creator-God could be able to organize and maintain the harmony of a system as complicated as this.

But, for this system to run smoothly, it is necessary for *everyone and everything* to be connected to God and willing to fill their place in His plan. Like the intricate inner workings of a wind-up clock, if one part stopped functioning as it should, the whole clock's operation would be affected. In the same way, one selfish, uncooperative individual can potentially cause problems throughout the entire universe!

By choosing to direct our own lives and do things our own way, we will not be cooperating with our Creator's plans, and we will not fill our place in His network. Therefore, we will not be where we need to be to receive the things God sends our way, (no wonder our needs are not met); nor will we pass on the things God has planned for us to share with those around us. Thus the flow of benefits through the whole network

is disrupted—in the same way that one pebble thrown into a pond causes ever widening ripples that eventually reach the farthest shore.

Unfortunately, we have all selfishly chosen to do things our own way; and the results of not following God's plan can easily be seen in the condition of our planet. In the beginning "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it." Genesis 2:15; and by extension, the human race, as it spread across the globe, was to take care of the whole world. However, instead of being a benefit to the earth, we have come close to destroying it! No wonder sin was confined to this planet. One of the things Christ's death showed was what the eventual extent of the ruin caused by being out of harmony with God's plan would be—even the death of the Creator Himself.

More importantly though, Christ's death is a demonstration of God's love. It shows that He too operates by the same principle of living to benefit others. Christ's death shows that He is willing to do whatever is necessary for the good of His creatures, even to the point of giving the ultimate gift—His life! "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. He died to show us that we really *can* trust Him. That in all His plans, He really *is* organizing and directing things for our best good. In fact, because of His infinite wisdom, power, and love, He can do a much better job of looking out for our interests than we are able to do for ourselves.

But God does not want us to just follow Him out of instinct, simply because we are programmed that way. He wants us to follow Him because *we recognize* that His way is best—best for us *and* best for everything else. Therefore, unlike the rest of nature, God created humans with the ability to choose whether to be a part of His plan, or to go our own selfish way.

Giving us this choice was part of God's original plan at creation. "Free choice," as it is called, opened the possibility for someone to go his or her own way—and then to deceive others into thinking that going their own way would be best. So, as a part of His design in the creation of this earth, Christ planned to come and die for those who may be deceived. He is the "Lamb *slain from the foundation of the world.*" Revelation 13:8, (emphasis supplied). His death made the "plan of redemption" possible, providing the opportunity for us to be brought back into harmony with both Himself and the rest of His creation, (see Colossians 1:19-23).

Since Adam and Eve, all of us have selfishly chosen to go our own way instead of following our Creator's plan—we have all chosen the confusion which has resulted in unfulfilled needs. Like a broken clock or a disconnected branch, the inevitable result is death. But on the cross, Jesus died in our place so that by cooperating with Him, we could again live fulfilled, harmonious lives. He says, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

But, it is important to note that we cannot bring ourselves back into harmony. That would just be another form of doing things our own way. In John 15, Jesus did not represent us as a whole plant, we are just branches of the Vine. Since we have all chosen to go our own way, we have all disconnected ourselves from God; and we are not able to reconnect ourselves to Him any more than a severed branch could reattach

itself to the vine. Only the Creator can re-create this connection. All we can do is give up our selfishness, and choose to co-operate with Him; trusting and allowing Him to do what needs to be done, to reconnect us, and to strengthen our connection to Him. Each day, and several times throughout the day, we should renew our choice to stay connected to Him, asking Him to keep the connection strong, and to pour His life through us so we can be a benefit to others. If we ever find that we have listened to and acted on the temptation to go our own way again, we simply need to recommit ourselves to Him and let Him reconnect us once more. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24.

It is my prayer in writing this, that by studying both the Bible and nature you will become acquainted with God and observe His plan; that you will understand His love, wisdom and willingness to do what is best for you, and for all His creations; and that you will recognize that His plan of sharing and working together is better than our way of selfishness and confusion. It is also my prayer that you will desire to be in harmony with Him and the rest of His creation; and that you will allow Him to reconnect you to Himself, and make the changes in your life that will bring you back into harmony.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil." Proverbs 3:5-7.

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### Why an "Extra?"

To put it simply, there are other things I want to share with you that don't quite fit into the "regular" format of "Preparing to Stand" —usually because of their length. So, from time to time there will be an "Extra" issue, which will probably focus on a single feature rather than the variety which the regular issues of "Preparing to Stand" have. And yes, just in case you were wondering, there are already several more "Extras" planned.

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### Contact Information

If you are not receiving "Preparing to Stand" directly, and you would like to be on my emailing list, or if you want to be taken off my emailing list for any reason, send me an email.

*"Preparing to Stand"*

Jim Buller  
jabuller@juno.com

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*Counsels on Stewardship* page 26

"Christ will not permit one selfish person to enter the courts of heaven. No covetous person can pass through the pearly gates; for all covetousness is idolatry.