



V **THE**
VOICE OF TRUTH
INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME FORTY-NINE

**THE
HEART
OF
CHRISTIANITY**

Help Is Just a Prayer Away



While on earth we know we're strangers
And as vagabonds we roam
'Tis a pathway filled with dangers
That we have to travel home.

Oft it's hard to keep on going
In this struggle day by day
But there's comfort found in knowing
Help is just a prayer away.

When temptations sore beset us
And we're drowning in dismay
We've a friend Who won't forget us
And will hear us when we pray.

Though this road that we've been given
Oft is clouded with despair
Help devine decends from heaven
When we go to God in prayer.

— Harry Presley

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

BAPTISM is our entrance **into Christ** (Galatians 3:26,27).

BAPTISM is our entrance **into the body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 12:13).

BAPTISM is the **birth** into the **Kingdom of God** (John 3:3-5).

BAPTISM is the **water** in which we are **washed** by the blood of Christ (Romans 6:3,4).

As the flood bore up the ark and saved Noah and his family,
*“there is also an antitype which now saves us, namely **BAPTISM** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21).



CONFESS JESUS AS LORD: ACTS 8:37

REPENT OF SINS: LUKE 13:3

BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS GOD'S SON : JOHN 8:24

HEAR THE GOSPEL: ROMANS 10:17

**What Must I Do
to Be
Saved?**

**Jesus said,
“Upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH...”
(Matthew 16:18).**

AD 33, the day of PentecostActs 2

We read in the New Testament of **the church** (Ephesians 3:10), **the church of God** (1 Corinthians 11:22), **the family of God** (Ephesians 3:15), **the bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:22-27), **the body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 12:27), **the kingdom of Christ** (John 18:36), and other designations, all referring to the **ONE** group of people, separated from the world through the spiritual birth into **the family of God**.

This group is the church which is called after the name of Christ and which was purchased from the world by His blood.

Jesus taught of **one church**, He died for **one family**, He saves **one body**, and He is returning for **one bride**.

If Jesus began only one family, and He is coming back for the one bride that wears His name, HOW IS IT THAT WE HAVE HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES IN THE WORLD TODAY? When did Jesus begin those churches? Or if Jesus did not begin them,

WHY were they started,
WHO started them,
HOW were they started,
WHEN were they started?
and **WHO** has promised to save their members?

“...from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves... (Acts 20:30).

WHY were other churches started? Perverse things began to be taught.
WHO did this? Men.

HOW did men start churches that compete with the church of Christ?

They drew away disciples after themselves.

WHEN were these churches started? History shows that the Gnostics separated in the first century, Roman Catholics in 606, Lutherans in 1530, Baptists in 1607, Methodists in 1729.....

Can a saved person be lost?

There are religious people who teach that once a person has been saved, he cannot be lost, no matter what he does or does not do.

Can a Christian be lost?

1 Jesus said, *"I am the true vine,
and My Father is the vinedresser.*

**2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit
He takes away;**

*and every branch that bears fruit He prunes,
that it may bear more fruit.*

**3 "You are already clean because of the word
which I have spoken to you.**

4 "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.*

5 "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.

**6 "If anyone does not abide in Me,
he is cast out as a branch and is withered;
and they gather them and throw them into the fire,
and they are burned.**

**7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

**8 "By this My Father is glorified,
that you bear much fruit;**

***so you will be My disciples"* (John 15:1-8).**

**Jesus says a Christian will be lost
IF HE DOES NOT BEAR FRUIT.**



HAVE YOU BEEN SCRIPTURALLY BAPTIZED?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

The religious world defines baptism as being immersion, sprinkling, and pouring, with, or in, water. Others say that baptism is in the Spirit only.

Most religious leaders say that baptism has nothing to do with salvation, that it is merely an outward sign that one has already been saved.

The Bible defines baptism as a burial in water. Paul says that we are *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:12). To the Romans he wrote, *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:3,4).

We have one example in Acts 8:26-39 of Philip preaching Christ to a man from Ethiopia. He understood what Philip was preaching well enough that when they came to a pool of water, he asked what was keeping him from being baptized. The inspired text does not record for us what Philip taught the eunuch about baptism, but it is obvious that he did deal with the subject, and that the eunuch understood its importance, because of the question he asked. Philip answered that he could be baptized, but only if he believed in Christ with all of his heart. The eunuch replied, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* So, right then and there — not waiting for days or for some confirmation by humans — they

stopped the chariot and both Philip and the eunuch went down in the water so that the Ethiopian man could be immersed with his Lord for the forgiveness of his sins, just as Jesus had promised in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15,16.

Now with this man's baptism in mind, we ask, "What did Paul say about baptism?" That it is a burial in water. That is exactly what the eunuch experienced on that desert road so long ago.

Again in Romans 6, Paul shows that baptism pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Just as Christ died on the cross, the sinner dies to his sins. As Christ was buried in an earthly tomb, the sinner is buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, and as Christ was resurrected from that earthly tomb, one is resurrected from his watery grave to live for the Lord. Paul explained it like this: "*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*" (Romans 6:17,18).

Please note that Paul said that they had been the servants of sin but that now they had become the servants of righteousness. What had made the difference? They had obeyed the Lord. The *doctrine* to which Paul referred was *the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ*. *The form of the doctrine was their death to sin, their burial in the waters of baptism, and the resurrection from baptism*. As a result of their obedience from the heart, they had become the servants of righteousness. Note: the change in masters had not been accomplished by "faith alone" but by obeying God in faith, or with their whole hearts.

Notice also that their baptism was described as being "into the death of Christ". That is, they were baptized into the benefits of his death, having their sins washed white in the blood of Christ. Through this process, they were forgiven and experienced the new birth into the family of God.

Was there something special or even magical about the water itself? No, there is no power in water. The power is in faithful obedience to God. **God says** the washing away of our sins takes place in the waters of baptism (Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Peter 3:20,21). *That* is the power in the water — that it is the element in which we can obey God and have our sins washed in the blood of His Son.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 we read of *the facts of the gospel*: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We are told that we must *obey the gospel*, but we cannot obey **facts**. Instead, there are **commands** that must

be obeyed. These include **believing that Jesus is God's Son** ("*...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*" John 8:24); **repentance** or turning away from a life of sin ("*...unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" Luke 13:3); **confession of faith in Christ** ("*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*" *And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"* Acts 8:37); and **immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins** ("*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" Acts 2:38).

Obedying these commands enables one to picture in his own obedience the obedience of Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The command He made to His disciples was, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15,16). Peter and the apostles, in preaching the first gospel sermon, told those who had become believers to, "*...repent and be baptized for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Peter also said in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism saves us, just as Noah and his family were saved by the water when it bore the ark up above the destruction of the flood. Certainly these passages are not teaching that "baptism only" saves or that the waters of baptism have saving power in and of themselves, but every person in the New Testament who dealt with the subject of baptism taught that it is necessary for salvation; that as one obeys the gospel of Christ in faith and obedience, culminating in baptism, he is saved by the cleansing blood of Christ.

It is so sad that the majority of believers in Christ oppose the simple act of baptism because they have been told over and over again that water does not save or that baptism does not save. It is true that the denominational concept of baptism is not the scriptural concept, and therefore it cannot save anyone. But the New Testament clearly teaches that no one can be saved without the new birth — and the culminating act of the new birth is baptism.

While the majority in the religious world reject Bible baptism and deny that it is in any way involved in salvation, most will then require people to be "baptized" according to the denominational ideas of baptism in order to become a member of their denomination. If baptism is not necessary for salvation, why should men make it necessary for church membership? Why should it have any importance at all?

Let each one who claims that he is saved without being baptized take this test: **When were you saved? How long after that were you bap-**

tized? If you say you were saved at one point and then one day, two days or two weeks later you were baptized, how does that harmonize with the commands we have already read in Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, and other passages? Also, Galatians 3:27 states clearly that we are baptized into Christ. So if you say you were saved one day and then baptized two weeks later, it means that you were saved **outside of Christ**, *before* you entered Him. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:26,27). **Do you really believe that anyone can be saved outside of Christ?**

Have you been scripturally baptized? You may have become a believer, you may have even been immersed in water. But if you have not become a believer in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Him as your Lord (not confessing that you are a sinner), and if you have not been baptized to have your sins washed away in the blood of Christ, then you have not been scripturally baptized and — according to the Scriptures — you are **not saved**, you are not **in Christ**, and you have not been added to the Lord’s church. If this description fits your situation, maybe you feel angry as you read these words. Maybe you are thinking, “It is wrong to judge. Who are you to say I’m not saved? that I’m not in Christ, and that my sins have not been forgiven?”

And you would be right **if I were the one doing the judging and the one saying that you are not saved**. But the irony is that you, yourself, are the one saying these things about your own spiritual condition. How? You are saying that you are not saved because you are denying the very words and commands of our Savior. In His very face you are having the audacity to say that what He commanded is not necessary, and that you have the knowledge and authority to claim salvation without being baptized into His death. You have pitted yourself against Christ and the writers of the New Testament. Their very words will be there to judge your condition in the last day: *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”* (John 12:48-50).

Do you want to be saved? Listen to the Lord. Believe in Him and obey Him. God’s grace will then save you. It is as simple as that. †



THOSE BEREANS AND THESSALONIANS

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

A very notable verse of Scripture is found in Acts 17. Here we find Paul preaching to both Jews and Gentiles in Berea. Luke compliments the Bereans as he says in 17:11: *“These were more fair-minded (noble-KJV) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”* Notice that Luke calls them “noble”, or “fair-minded”, and he bases his assessment of them on two actions taken by them:

- (1) *“they received the Word with all readiness.”*
- (2) *“they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”*

Now let’s go over to 1 Thessalonians. Luke has just told us in Acts 17:11 that the Thessalonians didn’t measure up to the Bereans. However, as we read Paul’s letter to the Christians of Thessalonica, we must conclude that the comparison in Acts 17 was with the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica, and not with those who became Christians there. I call your attention particularly to 1 Thessalonians 2:13: *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”* Paul makes it very clear just why it is that he esteems them so highly — their acceptance of and attitude toward the Word of God, the Bible. Surely it is obvious that the church today needs to emulate those who became Christians in both Berea and Thessalonica by being careful students of God’s Word. We owe it, both to ourselves and to the Lord, to weigh and measure all that we hear and read by the standard of the Bible.

Sometimes well-meaning folks may want to see some thing or idea imple-

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mented in a congregation, and when it is objected to, their defensive response may be, “What’s wrong with it?” I want to kindly suggest that that is the wrong question. I believe that the more proper question would be, “Is it authorized by the Bible?” We must have Biblical support for our beliefs and practices.

Those who preach and teach will certainly be held accountable for what they say (James 3:1). But, we as hearers are also responsible for comparing what we hear with what the Bible says on the subject. If the Bible endorses the teaching, we are obligated to accept it. If the teaching is in conflict with the Bible, we must reject it.

Most unfortunately, it continues to be true in the 21st century just as it was in the 1st century, that there are occasionally those who are not so well-meaning who come along with new doctrines and plans in an effort to gain followers for themselves, rather than for Christ. This is not merely a charge that comes from rash and harsh self-righteous judgmentalism — it is a factual reality borne out in Scripture. If we are faithful to the example of the Bereans and Thessalonians, we will already be familiar with the heart-rending warning that the apostle Paul stated regarding not only false teachers in general, but even regarding elders in the church, as he poured out his heart to the elders of the Ephesus congregation in Acts 20:27-31:

“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

In the Old Testament both Isaiah (30:10) and Jeremiah (12:6) told of some folks who desired “smooth words”. We all like to hear those words that are smooth, that are soothing to our ears. We can sometimes eat something that really tastes great when we eat it, but it may cause indigestion for hours afterwards. Smooth words can likewise sound really great when we hear them, but they may cause us untold heartache later. The words of the Lord are truth, and are not always smooth.

I’m sure that many of us have heard the saying that “attitude determines altitude”, and there’s a lot of truth in that. Let me suggest that attitude will also determine our eternal destiny. This begins with our attitude toward God’s Inspired Word. May God help us all to be fully committed to letting the Bible be our sole authority in all matters pertaining to Christianity. †

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O God, Please Be Jealous of Me!

Michael L. King

It is not uncommon during courtship for one member of a pair to conduct himself or herself in such a way as to intentionally incite jealousy in the other. This is usually done to extract a confirmation of one's love and affection. There is a measure of personal satisfaction in having significant others "fight" over us to secure our loyalty and devotion.

The nation of Israel was selected to be God's love. He heaped His affection and His providence upon them, but, sadly, in futility. He instructed them to *"have no other gods before me ... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God"* (Exodus 20:4,5). This appeal was repeated with similar sentiments, usually pleading for them to avoid giving attention to other gods.

Hear God's repeated reminder as the Children of Israel are approaching the Promised Land: *"Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; For thy God is a jealous God among you lest the*

anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 6:14,15).

The entrance of the Israelites into Canaan was contingent upon their total devotion and loyalty to God (Deuteronomy 6:18). We know in advance how the last chapter of their history concluded. The Northern Kingdom was sent into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. under Sargon, and beginning in 589 B.C., the Southern Kingdom was held hostage for seventy years in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

It would be easy to conclude that God was harsh or extreme in His demands. Our attitude changes when we realize the reason for God's jealousy. Moses explains: *"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved*

you ... brought you out ... redeemed you ... keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Israel had been the recipient of God’s marvelous love but persisted in provoking their God to wrath. They rebelled against Him from the time of deliverance from Egyptian bondage to their arrival at the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 9:7).

Keep in mind, *“whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4). The lesson for us is that *“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16), through whose blood the church was purchased (Acts 20:28b) and through whom sins are washed away (Revelation 1:5).

Man today faces the same threat of being *“drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:14,15). God does not want us to have an “affair” with the god of this world, causing us to be drawn away from His love. Instead, He desires that *“the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (2 Corinthians 4:8). He has promised

us *“all things that pertain unto life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3), in addition to *“every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). We reciprocate that love by obedience to Christ (John 14:15).

Great hurt comes to the heart of God when we “fall away”, for in doing so we *“crucify...the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:6).

The desire of every individual whose gaze is set on heaven should be for God to be jealous of him or her. His unlimited love for His created deserves total devotion of heart, soul, strength, and mind in return (Luke 10:27). Could we be guilty of *“provoking the wrath of God”* by flirting with the god of this world and rejecting the love of God? The song writer expressed what our response should be: *“O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.”* †

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**“If you love Me, keep My commandments”
(John 14:15).**

Jesus, the Lawyer for the Christian's Defense

Gary C. Hampton

Having proven sin to be a part of everyone's life in the first chapter of his letter, John, the apostle, hastened to show that it should not be counted as normal, and therefore a thing in which one should indulge. John wrote as an aged man in the faith to those much younger. He used endearing words that a mother might use as she held and caressed one of her own children.

The Christian's goal should ever be sinlessness, that is, not even committing one act of sin. When a Christian does sin, he keeps on having (present tense) an advocate, which Thayer defines as "one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor." The Holy Spirit is described by Jesus as "*another advocate*" (John 14:16; see also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Satan is the Christian's accuser and Jesus is the defense attorney (Revelation 12:10). The case is pled before God's divine bar of justice. Jesus is "with", or by the side of, the Father,

thus ever ready to defend His saints (compare Luke 12:8; Acts 7:56).

Woods notes, "There is no article before the word 'righteousness' in the Greek text. The meaning is, Jesus, a Righteous One, pleads the cause of unrighteous ones. Only the pleading of such an Advocate could possibly avail." What good would come from one unrighteous one appealing to God in behalf of another?

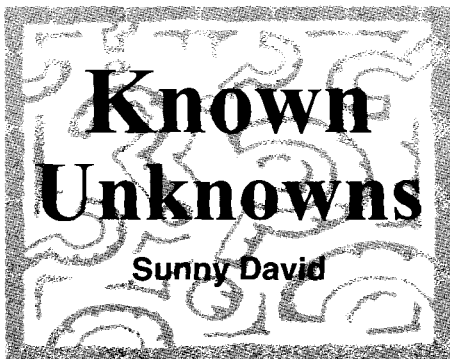
Christ is the propitiation, or as Thayer says, "the means of appeasing", for the sins of individual Christians. God's wrath is directed at sin. Christ came to provide the means of the removal of that wrath. John says for "our sin", which includes him in the group needing that great sacrifice. Jesus' gift is available to the whole world if they will but accept it in obedient faith (1 John 2:2; John 3:16,17; Romans 3:24-26). †

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Sometime back I was watching on TV the press conference of the U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. He was replying to questions regarding WMD in Iraq, when he made the following remarks to one of the questions: "There are known knowns, there are things we know we know. There are known unknowns; we know there are some things we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know."

I thought it was very interesting, even from the standpoint of Scripture. It is true that there are things we know we know. Just as the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 19:1, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*" He also wrote, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (Psalm 14:1). We know that God is the Creator of the whole universe. It is evident. But then, there are things we know are there, for the Bible tells us about them, but we do not know where they are. Such as, hades, and heaven, and hell. These are known unknowns. Also, Scrip-

turally speaking, there are unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know, as Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 29:29: "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*"



The apostle John exhorted Christians with these words: "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1,2).

The apostle is saying that now, at present, we know that we are children of God. We know this, first, because what God in Christ has done for us, making Him the propitiation for our sins through His death on the cross (1 John 1:10). Secondly, because we have believed

in Him and have obeyed His command to be saved (Mark 16:16). But it has not yet been revealed to us what we shall be in the future, after the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians.15:50-53). Yet, when Christ is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Men have always been curious about what form we will have in eternity. But God has not revealed that to us yet. And there must be a good reason for Him not to have done that. What we know, however, from the

Bible is only this, that when our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed from heaven, He will transform our lowly earthly bodies that they may be conformed to His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Isn't it a wonderful thought! †

Sunny David works with the church of Christ in New Delhi, India.



Picture of God

A little boy was working hard on a drawing, and his daddy asked him what he was doing. The reply came back, "Drawing a picture of God." His daddy said, "You can't do that, honey. Nobody knows what God looks like." But the little boy was undeterred and continued to draw. He looked at his picture with satisfaction and said, very matter-of-factly, "They will in a few minutes."

God's Way Is Right

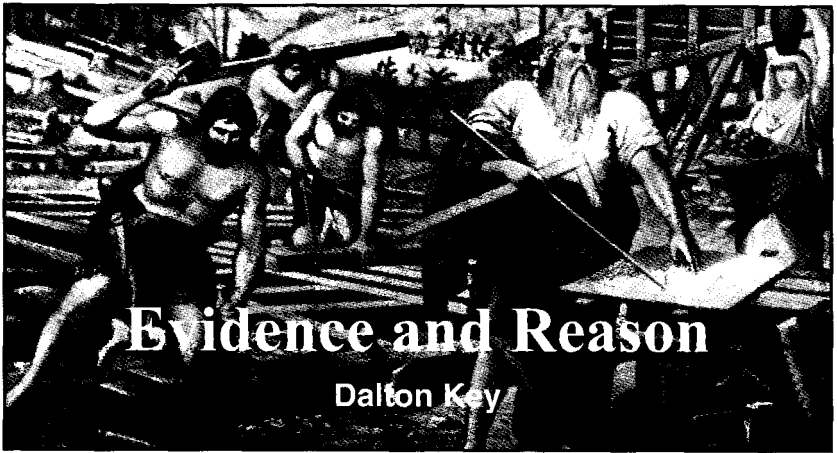
**There is no way for me to know
The path in which my feet should go;
To lead me out of darkest night,
Except God's Word — His Way is right.**

**From where I stand I cannot see
Just how He knows what's best for me;
And yet by faith, and not by sight,
I walk with Him — God's Way is right.**

**While those around me turn away
To Paths that only lead astray;
Help me abide in heaven's light,
And live for Thee — Whose Way is right.**

**When life is past, and time's no more,
When saved ones meet on yonder shore,
And know the fullness of delight;
We'll sing for aye — Thy Way is right.**

— Ted Kell



Both evidence and reason point convincingly to faith in God. The charge of “blind faith”, often leveled against the conviction of believers, better describes the plight of those who see a world without God.

“For every house is built by someone, and He that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4, McCord). The existence of a house suggests a builder. To imagine a house building itself, or accidentally exploding into existence, would be to contemplate the absurd. Such a nonsensical notion, void of any empirical, philosophical, or historical foundation, would be “blind faith” to the extreme.

But there is a blind faith even more ridiculous.

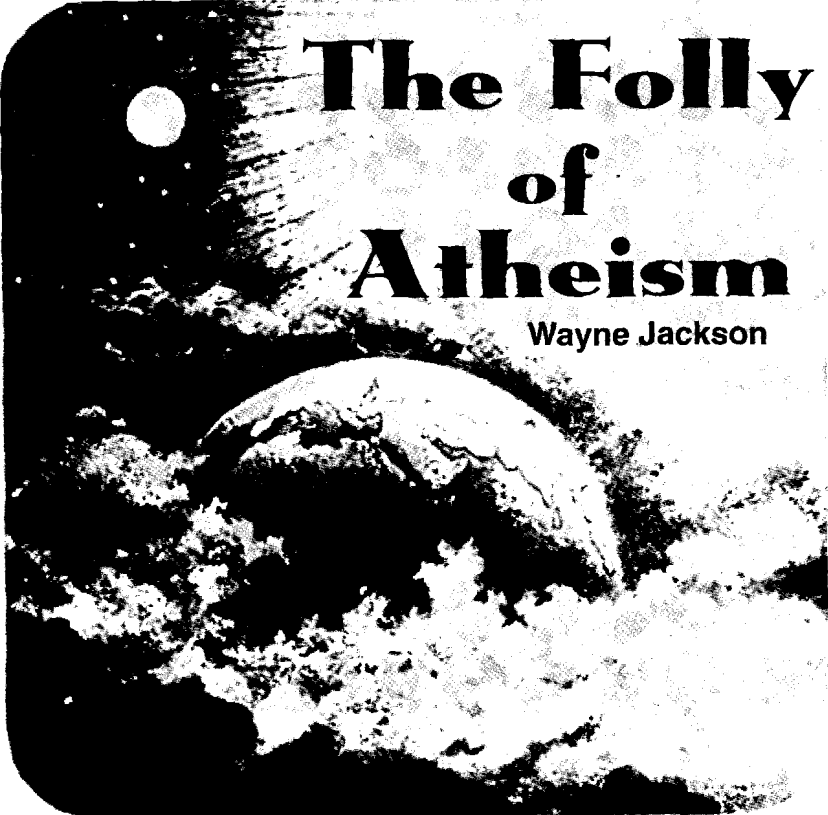
The imagination that everything in our universe — mass and matter, living tissue and intelligent beings

— has come into existence without a Designer, without a Maker, has become a matter of faith for many pseudo-scientists of our day. And with nothing but conjecture and theory to work with, such a faith is nothing if not blind.

Let me put it simply: Which requires a blinder faith — the thought of everything coming into existence from nothing, naturally, without God? Or the realization that all things must come from some source, from some beginning, in this case, from God?

The Psalmist had it right: *“The heavens declare the glory of God...The fool has said in his heart, There is no God”* (Psalms 19:1; 53:1). †

Dalton Key preaches for the North Amarillo Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, USA.



The Folly of Atheism

Wayne Jackson

Jesus once warned: "*Whosoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be in danger of the hell of fire*" (Matthew 5:22). And yet the Lord elsewhere addressed the scribes and Pharisees and declared, "*You fools...*" (Matthew 23:17). While the superficial student might see a conflict here, actually, there is none; the respective passages are addressing different matters. In the earlier

context, Christ is condemning the impulsive, insulting use of hateful epithets for the purpose of venting one's personal hostility. "Fool" (Greek — *moros*) may be designed to reflect upon the character of an adversary, in the sense of: "You scoundrel!" (Bruce, 107).

On the other hand, the word "fool" (or a kindred term, e.g., "foolish") may be employed calmly

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and objectively to describe someone who is acting in a senseless, stupid fashion. To certain misguided Christians who were being seduced away from Christ towards the Mosaic regime, Paul could say: "*O foolish Galatians...*" (Galatians 3:1). It makes for a fascinating study to explore the sort of person who is denominated as a "fool" in Scripture. Let us consider but one example — that of the atheist.

A thousand years before the birth of Jesus, the poet/king of Israel wrote: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 14:1). The Hebrew term for "fool" is *nabal*, which signifies a "senseless" person. Especially is the word used of one who has "no perception of ethical and religious claims" (Brown, et al., 614). In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the word rendered "fool" is *aphron*, literally, "mindless". It represents "the lack of common sense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual" (Vos, 44). In the passage just cited, the "fool" denies the existence of God. Elsewhere in the same book the term describes one who insults his/her Creator continually (Psalm 74:22). The prophet Isaiah employed the word as a description of the individual who stands in contrast to a noble-minded person (Isaiah 32:5).

Why is the one who affirms

"*there is no God!*" a fool? There are many factors.

First, in defiance of one of the most elementary principles of logic, the atheist suggests that "something" (e.g., the Universe) came from "nothing". Victor Stenger, an atheistic professor at the University of Hawaii, admits that "everyday experience and common sense" support the concept that something cannot come from nothing. Nevertheless, he suggests that "*common sense* is often wrong, and our normal experiences are but a tiny fraction of reality." If you want to be an atheist, you must put your "common sense" on the shelf!

Second, atheists contend that the entire Universe, estimated to be 20 billion light years across (the distance light could travel in 20 billion years at the rate of 186,000 miles per second), accidentally derived from a submicroscopic particle of matter. As one writer expresses it: "Astonishingly, scientists now calculate that everything in this vast universe grew out of a region many billions of times smaller than a single proton, one of the atom's basic particles" (Gore, 705). This is totally nonsensical.

Third, atheism contends that the marvelously-ordered Universe, designated as "Cosmos" by the Greeks because of its intricate design, is merely the result of an

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ancient explosion (the Big Bang). Does a contractor pile lumber, brick, wire, pipe, etc, on a building site, blast it with dynamite, and expect a fine dwelling to result? Is that the way atheists build their houses? To so argue is to reveal a truly "senseless heart" (cf. Romans 1:21).

Fourth, in spite of millions of examples in nature which suggest that biological life can derive only from a living source, atheists believe that billions of years ago, life was accidentally generated from inorganic materials. Common sense and experimentation argue otherwise, but skeptics are willing to abandon logic and to opt for the myth of "spontaneous generation", because the only other alternative is "special creation". To atheists, that simply is not a possibility. Why? Because the fool, for emotional reasons, has already decided: "*There is no God.*"

Fifth, atheists believe that blind, unintelligent forces of nature, via genetic mutations and the process of natural selection, produced the myriads of delightful creatures that inhabit Earth's environment. The skeptic can see that a simple pair of pliers, with only four components, must have been designed by an intelligent being, yet he argues that the human body, with its 100 trillion constituent elements (cells), organized into ten magnificent systems, is merely the result of

a marriage between Mother Nature and Father Time. How very stupid such ideology is!

Sixth, atheists believe that from a tiny speck of inorganic, self-centered matter, human consciousness and moral sensitivity evolved. That is utterly ludicrous; can a rock decide to "think"? Can a proton "feel" guilt? The notion that morality has developed merely as a survival factor (cf. Hayes, 174), is asinine in the extreme. Plants have survived; do they possess a moral code? And what if one decides that he doesn't care about a "survival" principle? Can he do any "wrong"?

When men refuse to have God in their knowledge, He gives them up to a "*reprobate mind*", i.e., one which does not "pass the test" (Romans 1:28). They are not "intellectuals", as they fantasize; they are fools. As G.K. Chesterton once said: "When men cease to believe in God, they do not believe in *nothing*; they believe in *anything!*" †

Wayne Jackson is the editor of *Christian Courier* and lives in Stockton, California, USA.



"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

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We all know one. You know, those young kids who can rattle off questions at speeds that would make most race drivers jealous. “Why is the sky blue? Why is water wet? What is dirt made of? Can worms smell? How do fax machines work?” While we encourage our young children to imagine and pre-

“wash up and get ready for dinner.”, conveniently changing the subject.

Unfortunately today many parents find themselves reacting to questions and topics, rather than planning ahead. As Christian parents, we need to be *proactive* rather than *reactive*. We need to be on the front line, teaching our children the

Your Children Have Been Drafted to Battle

Brad Harrub, Ph.D

tend, we often are rewarded with some very colorful, if not mind-boggling questions. Most of these questions we either answer quickly or simply, and then change the subject. Or, we use alternative strategies of diversion like food or videos.

But what happens when our children begin asking us tough questions that have to do with matters of faith? What happens when they come home from school and want to know how dinosaurs fit in with the Bible? Or what do we tell them upon discovering that their science class is studying evolution? Oftentimes, these important questions are left unanswered as our children are quickly instructed to

truth about the world around us as they grow, because if we don't, there is someone out there who is eager and willing to teach them another version.

Possessing a belief in God is not enough. Our children (and grandchildren!), need to know how to defend that belief. The truth is, one day in the not-so-distant future, our children will find their faith being challenged. Their ability to handle that situation will greatly affect whether they live a life loyal to God or whether they abandon Him and His teachings. There are literally thousands of evolutionists currently living who once espoused a belief in Christianity. Today they are apostates, placing more faith in

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science than the Word of God.

Picture for a moment the heart-breaking scene of two parents sending their young teenage son off to fight in a war. As tears roll down their faces, they cling to their son, wishing their hugs could somehow ward off the impending military assignment. Dad takes a minute to have a man-to-man talk with his son: keeping himself safe. And mom reminds him they will be there to support him throughout his upcoming ordeal.

There could be no mistaking that this family understands their son is going to war. And yet, how many families realize there is an ongoing war for their children's very souls? It is literally a fight — one that evolutionists, humanists, and skeptics have been waging for many decades.

And, sadly, this is a war that has resulted in thousands of spiritual casualties. There are no tears for this send-off. There are no man-to-man talks regarding a son keeping himself safe. Tragically, many parents are so caught up in their day-to-day routines that they don't even realize their son or daughter has been "drafted". And so, many parents just stand by silently as their children go into battle for their souls.

Parents, we need to change this attitude. If we are ever going to

stop the casualties, we must change our approach to the dangers our children face. We must wake up and realize this is indeed a **battle** — a battle in which **our children must know that we are going to fight for them until we draw our last breath**. We must arm them with the very best equipment to fight this war. As Christian parents and grandparents, we must first arm ourselves with knowledge based upon evidence, and then be prepared to tackle some of these "tough questions" asked by our children and grandchildren. And we must never be willing to give up.

In Ezekiel 22 we find one of the most troubling passages in all of God's Word. In reviewing the actions of Jerusalem, Ezekiel records that Jerusalem had violated most, if not all, of the Ten Commandments. The vast army of Nebuchadnezzar was poised around the city, about to begin a two-year siege that would bring utter destruction. In those days, the common practice to fortify a city was to build a giant wall. Enemies wanting to overthrow the city were then forced to



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concentrate their efforts on breaking through one portion of the wall. But, often, men of the city would rally at the breach and fight to protect their homeland. They were willing to “stand in the gap”.

At the end of chapter 22 we learn that this is not the case with Jerusalem. God said: *“I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their heads,” says the Lord God.*”

No one was willing to defend the breach. Parents and grandparents, we must be ready, willing, and able to stand in the gap and fight for the souls of our children! Unrighteousness still abounds. The laws and commands of God are still being violated. Jerusalem needed an individual who could step forward and

stand for the truth. The absence of that individual led to the ultimate destruction of the city and the nation.

Homes that are lacking individuals who are willing to stand in the gap today can expect a similar destruction. Have you heard the battle cry? Precious souls are at stake — your own children! †

Brad Harrub writes and lectures on Christian evidences.

“For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean, and not require him to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach him that the body is worth more than the soul ...

“For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require him to study the Bible is to teach him that it is much more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in Heaven.”

— David Lipscomb

Pretending

Shan Jackson



Pretend for a moment that you are a fish. You're just swimming around enjoying life. You're not bothering anybody and nobody's bothering you. The water is clean and cool and you're having a grand time.

Then you notice a tasty looking shrimp floating just below the surface. You love shrimp. In fact, it's your favorite meal. You realize that you're getting pretty hungry, so you make a mad dash at that shrimp, and you gobble him up before he knows what hit him.

But in your excitement, you failed to notice that sticking out of that shrimp's back is a fisherman's hook. Maybe you've never even seen a fisherman's hook before. Maybe some of your fellow fish had

tried to warn you about a fisherman's hook, but you never listened to them. Well, pretty soon you are the fisherman's lunch — not exactly what you had planned!

Friends and brethren, false teaching is much like that story. The Bible says that with feigned words false teaching can make merchandise of us (2 Peter 2:3). It can rock us to sleep. It can confuse and bewilder us. And then, like a hungry fish, it can get us, hook, line, and sinker. Remember, only God is our refuge and strength. May we always swim with Him. †

Shan Jackson preaches for the church of Christ in Port Lavaca, Texas, USA.

What Preachers Used to Say

Jack Harriman

"If I say anything in this sermon that is not in harmony with New Testament teaching, you will be my friend if you will come to me afterwards and bring this to my attention."

In former days, I heard preacher after preacher begin a sermon with a statement similar to this. Most of these were sincere in their request. They intended to accurately teach the word of God. They documented their message with many scriptural references. They

avoided statements that could be taken two or more ways. They understood they would be challenged by some of their listeners if they should teach inaccurately, and they invited such challenges.

This is not intended to be a blanket indictment of all preachers and churches, but I don't hear similar statements much any more, and my great concern is that attitudes toward the word of God have changed in both the pulpit and the pew.



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I would submit three comments:

First, mature gospel preachers have a responsibility not only to preach the word accurately but also to challenge the inaccurate preaching of it. *"I charge you... preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:1,2). The fact that this may make the challenger very unpopular must not prevent the doing of it. This is the charge we have from our Lord.

Second, elders are to challenge inaccurate teaching, thus protecting both the teacher and the church from unsound doctrine. He is to *"hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9). This requires knowledge, courage and tact, and, given the mood of our day, may result in charges of Phariseeism, etc.

Third, mature members must also do what they can to keep the teaching and practice of the church pure. A few days after a visiting preacher spoke, an elderly, infirm woman pointed out to me that one thing he had said was erroneous. After consideration, I agreed. She was correct. There are many such Bible students in the Lord's church who recognize erro-

neous teaching when they hear it.

If what is taught is not accurate, if it is not according to inspired teaching, if it is not in the Book, every mature member of the Lord's church should be able to recognize that fact and take proper corrective action.

And every mature member of the Lord's church has that responsibility †

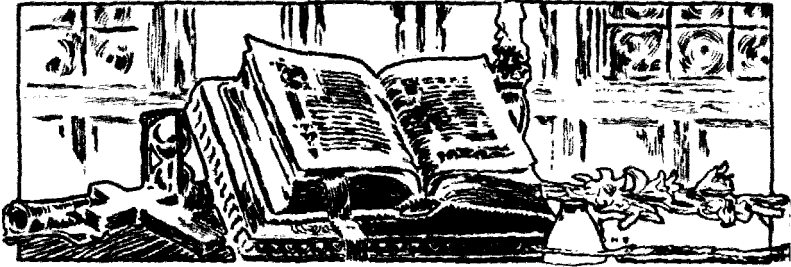
Jack Harriman is a gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.



The church is not a show-place where a professional clergyman performs while people come to watch. It is meant to be a vibrant, loving, honest, committed, worshiping fellowship of true believers who keep one another accountable and corporately minister the Word of God with boldness.

Churches like this will grow numerically as God Himself adds to the number (Acts 2:47). Equally important, they will grow in unity, knowledge, and maturity (Ephesians 4:13) as the saints are equipped to be ministers.

— Selected



Taking the Bible Out of the Church House

Bobby Dockery

On display in an old New England church building was a beautiful pulpit Bible. Above it was a sign which said: "Not to be taken from the building." It was there to be admired for its beauty, to lend atmosphere and decoration to the premises, but "not to be taken from the building."

It occurs to me that it is frequently true that the Bible is not taken from the church house. In the eyes of many people, the Bible is a book which has meaning only "at church"...it is exclusively for Sunday use...opened and consulted during the worship period, and then closed again until next Sunday...studied and preached "in church", but not unleashed on the world.

If our faith is to have any real

meaning, however, we must get the Bible out of the church house and into the world (Matthew 28:19,20). Let's notice some ways in which this must be done.

1. In Application. The Bible must be applied to our own lives. It must be lived before the world. *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ"* (Philippians 1:27). Too many Christians try to live "compartmentalized lives". They fence off a little corner of their lives which they label "Sunday" and say, "This is for God, but the rest is mine." They give Jesus a few hours of their time on the first day of the week, but are not really interested in taking Him home with them. Does Bible class on Sunday really affect the way you live the rest of the week? Does the

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faith you profess affect the way you do business, the way you behave in school, the way you conduct yourself on the job? Does it make a difference in your political choices? Are you really applying the Bible to your life?

2. In Confrontation. God's Word is a sword which must be used to confront evil (Ephesians 6:17)! *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God"* (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). Without fear, or embarrassment, or apology we need to use the Bible to oppose and expose the great immoralities of our time: homosexuality, abortion, pornography, child abuse, sexual sins, etc. We cannot afford to hide behind church doors and hope these problems will go away. We must take the Bible out into the world and declare God's

judgment against such sins and those who commit them.

3. In Proclamation. The message of the Bible must be shared with others. The treasure of God's good news has been put into earthen vessels — US! (2 Corinthians 4:7). And we must communicate it to others. The Gospel is precious beyond calculation. We must not keep it a secret! When was the last time you talked to a neighbor, a friend, a co-worker, a fellow student about Jesus? When was the last time you earnestly, seriously, urgently invited someone to church services with you? Don't keep the Bible a secret. Share it!

The church must never be content merely to read the Bible behind closed doors, while ignoring the world. We must strive to be the salt of the earth, bent on getting the Bible out of the church house and into the hearts and lives of people! †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

The Word of God

For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God
Nought else is worth believing.
I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever.



VERSE SEARCH

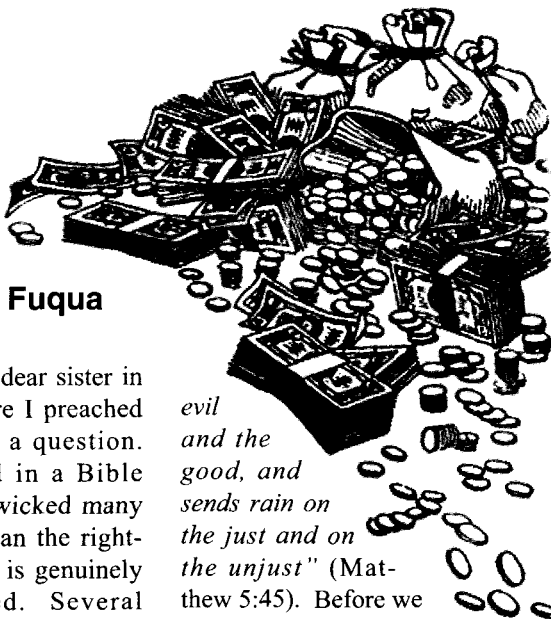
Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter twenty-seven, NKJV.

1. Because Paul had appealed to be tried by Caesar, he was put on board a ship for what place? (V. 1).
2. When they landed at Sidon, what did Julius permit? (V. 3).
3. Is the detailed description of Paul's travel route indicative that the writer of Acts knew the territory and was recording an accurate account? (Vs. 2-8).
4. Because of delays and difficulties in the voyage, what warning did Paul give when they were about to leave Fair Havens? (V. 10).
5. When they saw no sun or stars for days, and a heavy storm beat on the ship, how did they feel? (V. 20).
6. What did Paul tell the crew and fellow-passengers? (V. 21).
7. What did he urge them to do and with what assurance? (V. 22).
8. On what authority did Paul make such a prophecy? (V. 23).
9. The angel said, "*Do not be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before _____, and indeed _____ has granted you _____.*" (V. 24).
10. What happened on the fourteenth night? (V. 27).
11. What did some of the sailors try to do? (V. 30).
12. What did Paul say to the centurion in warning? (V. 31).
13. After urging the people to break their fourteen-day fast, what did Paul do? (Vs. 33-36).
14. How many people were on board the ship? (V. 37).
15. When the ship was broken up by the violence of the waves, what did the sailors intend to do to the prisoners? (V. 42).
16. "*But the _____, wanting to save _____, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could _____ should jump overboard and get to _____.*" (V. 43).

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

A Good Question

Dwight Fuqua



Some time ago, a dear sister in the congregation where I preached approached me with a question. She had been asked in a Bible study, "Why are the wicked many times blessed more than the righteous?" This question is genuinely and frequently asked. Several responses are appropriate:

1. We realize that this question has reference only to physical things. The wicked have not been blessed spiritually more than the righteous. Christians have access to all the spiritual blessings that are "in Christ" — redemption and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:3,7). The wicked are "without Christ" and have "no hope" (Ephesians 2:12).

2. We readily acknowledge that the wicked sometimes have more material possessions than the righteous. While this is not always the case, how do we explain this when it occurs? Jesus simply said, "He makes His sun rise on the

evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Before we cry "unfair", we need to factor in eternity. Do you remember the statement Abraham made to the rich man? "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Luke 16:24). Would you rather be the rich man or Lazarus?

3. We do well to remember that we are blessed above so many others. Our standard of living is so far above third-world countries that there can be no comparison. Faithful people about whom we read in the Bible — even kings — did not have the luxuries that we

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possess. We read of others who struggled for the bare necessities of life. Lazarus was a beggar (Luke 16:19,20). Paul knew how to be abased (Philippians 4:12). Even our Lord did not have His own bed (Luke 9:58). The persecuted endured deplorable conditions (Hebrews 11:37,38). How can we complain, in our comparative plenty?

4. We should rejoice that we have been so richly blessed. I challenge you to compare yourself with the less fortunate instead of the rich. God has given us all that we have (James 1:17). An inventory of our lives will cause us to thank Him, not complain (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18). Our blessings are so many that we have taken them for granted. Compare your situation with those who have no food, water, or shelter, or with the mother who

clutches her starving child to her breast. God forgive us for whining! Count your blessings instead of your wants.

5. Live for God and believe that He will provide. Put Him first in your life and He will take care of you (Matthew 6:33). Remember, we are to be content with food and clothing — a real challenge in our materialistic age (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Serve God, not riches (Matthew 6:24). Lay up treasure in heaven, not on the earth (Matthew 6:19,20). Guard against covetousness (Luke 12:15), which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The Master said, "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matthew 6:21). Where is your heart? A good question! †

Dwight Fuqua is the preacher for the Findlay Church of Christ in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

Application Is Almost Everything

A soap manufacturer and a minister were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap manufacturer casually said, "The Gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just observe. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world, and a lot of wicked people, too!"

The minister made no reply until they passed a dirty little child making mud pies in the gutter. Seizing the opportunity, the minister said, "I see that soap hasn't done much good in the world, for there is much dirt and many dirty people around." The soap manufacturer replied, "Oh, well soap is useful only when it is applied."

And the minister said, "Exactly! So it is with the Gospel!"

— Selected



What About Miracles?

Ken Tyler

Question: "The Bible tells of many miracles that happened. Do we have miracles today? Why or why not?"

Answer: The Bible teaches that we **do not** have miracles today. A miracle was a supernatural act of God, an act above and beyond the laws of nature. For example, God took one of the ribs of Adam and made Eve (Genesis 2:22). That was a miracle.

Today, many people refer to events as miracles when they are simply God's amazing but natural law. A child is born and someone says that it is a *miracle!* No, that is only God's *natural law*, which says that every seed reproduces after its own kind (Genesis 1:11,12,21,25).

To simply snap a human into existence would be a miracle.

The purpose of Bible miracles was to confirm the messenger, that is, to prove that he was from God and that the message he was speaking was God's Word. It is very important for us to realize that during Bible times, the people did not have the complete written revelation of God as we have today. We must remember that the Bible was only then being given. So how were the people to know who God's messengers were? They knew because God empowered His messengers to per-

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form miracles to prove that they had been sent by Him and that the message they were speaking was from Him. We are told in Mark 16:20, *“And they (apostles) went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”*

So when the complete message of God had been given in written form — in the New Testament — there was no longer a need for any man to perform miracles to prove that what he was saying was from God. All people have to do today is study the Bible and see if what is being preached is the truth. Therefore, miracles ceased when the complete revelation was given. I challenge anyone today to raise the dead, take up serpents, and drink deadly poison as was done in the first century (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:18). It can't be done!

Even the miracles Jesus performed were for the purpose of proving to people that He was the divine Son of God. He went forth and preached that He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world. How did people know He was the Savior? Simply by the fact that God empowered Him to perform miracles. Listen carefully to John 20:30,31, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **But these are written,***

that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” We plainly see from this passage that Jesus performed miracles to cause people to believe that He was the Son of God and, as a result, to be saved. Acts 2:22 tells us that Jesus was *“approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs.”*

No, we do not have miracles today, for there is no Biblical need. †

Ken Tyler is the preacher for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

A Curious Child

She plucked a rose bud
from its stem,

With curious mind she tried
To open it with no success
To take a look inside.

Inquisitive a child was she,
Asked mother as she pried,
“Why can't I do like God,
And open rose buds wide?”

Her mother, wise with
words so true,
To answer her replied,
“For God above, the God
of love,
Works always from inside.”

— **Shirl White**

Why Doesn't the Church Have Women Preachers?

Jimmy Young

The above question isn't a new one. I am also persuaded it's a question that will be asked until the end of time. With that said, I also know we are commanded to be ready to give an answer to those who ask questions about the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Sadly, so many seem to be ill-equipped to answer some of the most basic questions many are asking today. In answering the question as to why we do not have women preachers, I will approach it from two angles.

First, allow me to make it clear that the practice has nothing to do with "tradition". The decision not to have women preachers has nothing to do with maintaining a loyalty to any man-made **tradition**. If something is Scriptural, then it makes no difference whether it has been done in the past or not.

Nor does it have anything to do with ability. The absence of women from the pulpit of the Lord's church says nothing about their **ability**. Many women are outstanding communicators (some better than some men). Many women are very artic-

ulate. So, the practice has nothing to do with women being capable of speaking effectively before a public assembly.

I may also add that it has nothing to do with chauvinism. It isn't because we look down on women as being inferior to men. It isn't because we discount the many contributions women have made and will continue to make in the church. The Bible depicts many women as being very devoted to the cause of Almighty God. The Gospel accounts frequently mention women who played a prominent role during Jesus' earthly ministry. I will mention a few; (a) the widow who gave two mites (Mark 12:41-44), (b) the woman with the alabaster box of very precious ointment (Mark 14:3-9), (c) a multitude of women who ministered to Jesus out of their substance (Luke 8:1-3), (d) Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). I could easily mention no less than ten other examples (Luke 23:27; Matthew 27:55,56; Mark 16:9; Acts 16:14, 15; 17:4; 12,34; etc.).

Now, in explanation, I must say

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that the practice of not having women preachers has everything to do with Colossians 3:17 and 1 Peter 4:11. Whatever we do must be authorized by the name of the Lord Jesus, i.e., by His authority. Whatever we do must be justified by the “*oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11).

There is no command in the New Testament for women to “*preach the Word*”. There is no approved example in the New Testament of women preaching/teaching to a mixed assembly of men and women. Where is it implied in the New Testament of women being authorized to do such? It’s not there. The practice also has everything to do with 1 Timothy 2:11-14. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul commanded (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37) the women to learn in silence with all subjection. The word “silence” here does not enjoin absolute silence, but quiet submission. Some will argue that we are saying a woman cannot sing. This isn’t true, for women are to sing just like every other Christian is to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). In the area of teaching, she isn’t to teach over a man, that is, she isn’t to “lead/ usurp” authority over the man. Instead of leading the way in the teaching process, she is to learn with all subjection. This in no way makes the man a male chauvinist.

Finally, the practice also has everything to do with 1 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Corinthians 14:34,35. In God’s order of things, the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Folks, *priority of rank* does not imply *inferiority of quality*; otherwise Christ would be less God than the Father. Christ was no less Deity than the Father, but He fulfilled the subordinate role He was sent to fulfill. Likewise, woman is not inferior to man, but she has been assigned a supporting role in this matter rather than a leading role.

I know women are important to the church, and are even commanded to teach other women (Titus 2:3,4). Thus, women do have a God-given role in the church, and it’s a very important role. God help us that we do not become disenchanted with His way of doing things. May each of us, as man and woman, accept our roles and fulfill them to the best of our ability. There were no women apostles, no women preachers or teachers over the man or mixed groups recorded in the New Testament church. We follow the New Testament pattern in the Lord’s church; thus we have no women preachers. †

Jimmy Young preaches for the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Romans 16:17,18

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause **divisions and offenses**, *contrary* to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by **smooth words and flattering speech** deceive the hearts of the simple.

CONTRARY

Socially and religiously it has become increasingly taboo to “judge” and/or criticize the beliefs or practices of another person. But this Scripture says that there are practices that are **CONTRARY** to God’s will. This **contrariness** is condemned.

DIVISIONS and OFFENSES

Division in a physical family is the most destructive thing that can happen to it. Division among those who profess to be believers in Christ is even more destructive, spiritually, whether it be among members of the church of Christ specifically, or among believers in the broader sense of the word. Division brings offenses, which results in souls being lost eternally — an unspeakable tragedy.

DOCTRINE

The cry among many is, “Preach the love of Christ, but don’t alienate people with legalism — with doctrine.” *But humans are not the authority in spiritual matters; God is the authority.* And God’s word says here that it is not only the “spirit of Christ” that matters, but the **doctrine** must be taught as well.

SMOOTH WORDS and

FLATTERING SPEECHES

Often people are happier with an entertaining message than with one that is true to the Bible. This verse warns us to be on guard, to hold to true doctrine in a united body of believers.

DECEIVE

Many souls will be lost eternally because people blindly and innocently followed smooth words and flattering speeches into total religious deception. We are warned repeatedly not to allow this to happen. Our protection is to **know the doctrine!**

YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE IN HEAVEN AND HELL, DO YOU?

Demar Elam

The average Christian would most likely say, "Of course I believe in heaven and in hell!" However, to say you *believe* in these two places is one thing, and to *live in a manner* that *proves* you believe in them is another. I once heard an illustration used in a sermon concerning a preacher and his infidel friend who met on the street and began talking. This illustration had a profound effect on my thinking and opened my mind to the possibility that many are *saying* they believe in heaven and hell, but in reality they do not.

The preacher and his infidel friend met on the street and recognized each other from college days. They had been good friends during those years but had not seen each other since leaving school. They began to renew their friendship and to reminisce. They talked about almost everything they had experienced together in the past. As they were about to go their separate ways the infidel said to the preacher, "You don't really believe in heaven

and hell, do you?" The preacher was taken back at the suggestion of such a thought. "Of course I believe in heaven and hell," he replied. His friend said, "Then I must call you a liar, because if you really believed in those two places, you would have talked to me about my soul. According to the Bible, I am lost and headed to hell, and yet you talked about everything in the world with me but what should have really mattered."

It is shocking to think that we might be confessing one thing with our tongue and in reality living out something entirely different in our daily lives. Christians need to search their hearts regarding the answer to this question. If we really believe that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, a place "*where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:44), then of necessity we will speak to everyone we can in order to warn them of pending destruction. Do we really believe that "*The wicked shall be turned into*

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hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17)? Do we really believe the words found in Revelation 21:8, "*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, and sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*"? Do you personally believe there is going to be a second death? Do you really believe this? Do you believe it so strongly that you must act upon your belief and warn people of this second death that awaits them because of their sinful lives and their failure to accept the gift of God's love, Jesus Christ, into their lives? *Saying* we believe in hell is one thing, and *living* in a practical manner that demonstrates we believe there is a hell is another matter.

Heaven is spoken of as being a place where the faithful children of God will finally be delivered from the sorrows, tribulations, and the heartaches, pains, and death faced in this life. According to John, the beloved disciple, heaven is a place where, "*...God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*" Does that not excite your heart? Do you

believe it? How strongly do you believe?

Remember what the infidel said to the preacher: "If you really believed in heaven and in hell, you would have talked to me about my soul." Often we hear people say, "Well, why are we here? What is life all about? What is my purpose for being here?" A casual reader of the Bible knows that God's Word teaches that this life is preparatory for life beyond this present existence. Heaven and Hell are real. Judgment is sure and certain. God's gift of love is extended to all people through Christ. God's love for His creation has been shed abroad through Jesus, who saves people from the impending doom that awaits all who refuse to accept Him through obedience and service. If we believe in the resurrection, in hell, and in heaven, then we will talk to people about their relationship with Christ. Remember that mental belief of the existence of heaven and hell causes us to share our faith with others, but it is the extent and depth of our belief in heaven and hell that *compels* us to speak to others about their eternal existence. †

Demar Elam is the Director of Mission Studies at Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Fear of Questions

David Mendiola

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

In a terrible accident at a railroad crossing, a train smashed into a car and pushed it nearly four hundred yards down the track. Though no one was killed, the driver took the train company to court.

At the trial, the engineer insisted that he had given the driver ample warning by waving his lantern back and forth for nearly a minute. He even stood and convincingly demonstrated how he had done it. The court believed his



story, and the suit was dismissed.

“Congratulations,” the lawyer said to the engineer when it was over. “You did superbly under cross-examination.” “Thanks,” he said, “but he sure had me worried. I was afraid he was going to ask if the lantern was lit!”

In a similar way, we often go through our lives afraid that someone will ask us a particular question. If someone asks me why I believe in God and not evolution, what will I say? What if someone asks me how I can possibly believe in the resurrection? What should I say if someone asks me why I believe the Bible truly is the Word of God, or why I believe that it teaches this or that?

Instead of being detrimental, as in the case of the engineer above, though, such questions provide us with an opportunity to share our faith. Don't be afraid for anyone to ask! †

David Mendiola is a Christian inmate in prison in Huntsville, Texas, USA.

During Times of Trial

Jesús Rodríguez

How should a Christian act during trying situations? At times in the church there arise situations that are difficult for us to understand or manage. It is then that we must go to the Word of God in order to know how we must function as Christians.

The first thing that we must do is to ask God to help us to understand and control our emotions. For that reason we must always go to Him in prayer. Our emotions often cloud our understanding and do not permit us to reason clearly. *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:5-8).

When we have with perseverance asked the guidance of the Lord in prayer, we should ask ourselves: What would Jesus do in such a situation? How are the fruits of the Spirit working in me? *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,*

longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23).

Christ teaches us the importance of mercy and pardon. If we do not feel compassion for those who persecute us, if we do not deal fairly with those who don't especially please us, how can we expect pardon from the Lord toward us if we don't know how to forgive others? It could be that some day we ourselves will need the mercy and pardon which we may be denying to someone else today.

Brethren, let's remember this: Christ is constantly giving us a chance. Let's do the same to others. †

Jesús Rodríguez is a preacher of the gospel in the Church of Christ in Mesa, Arizona, USA.

**Forgiveness is
the key that
unlocks the door
of resentment
and the
handcuffs of
hate.**

Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word.

1. **100** I was not an apostle of Jesus but was one of the elders in the church in Jerusalem (Matthew 15:13).
2. **90** I became spokesman for the leadership of the church in response to Paul's work among the Gentiles (15:14-19).
3. **80** Among the classic statements of doctrine which the Holy Spirit inspired me to make is *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (1:22).
4. **70** Concerning the compassionate work of Christians, I said, *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (2:27).
5. **60** I warned strongly against the sin of showing partiality to one person over the other, based on wealth or position (2:1-6).



6. **50** Concerning the necessity of works in the life of the Christian, I said, *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (2:14,17).

7. **40** I also spoke against the evils committed through unguarded speech (3).

8. **30** I urged patience, peace, and righteousness (3:17,18).

9. **20** My general letter to Christians, one of the earliest books of the New Testament, also bears my name.

10. **10** I was a half-brother of Jesus, though I did not believe He was the Messiah until after His death and resurrection (Matthew 13:55).

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Windle Kee

As he stood before Felix, the apostle Paul said that the reason he was on trial was his hope in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6).

Two years later, as he stood before Festus and Agrippa, Paul raised the question: "*Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?*" (Acts 26:8, NIV).

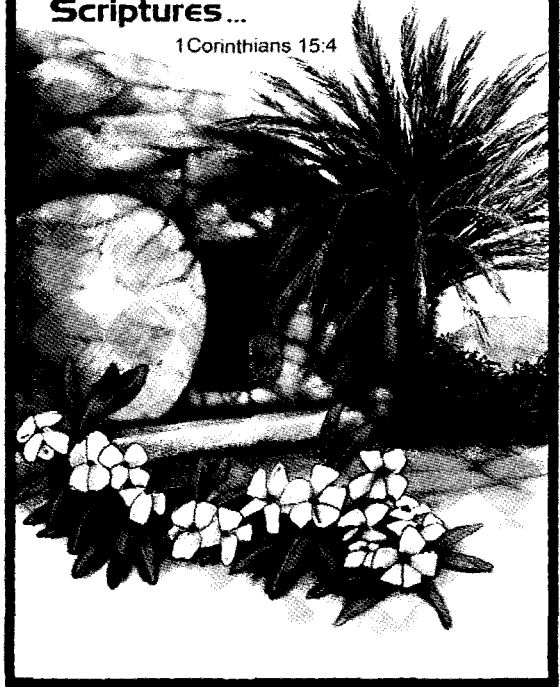
In their preaching, both Peter and Paul used every opportunity to assert that Jesus Christ actually had been raised from the dead, never to die again.

Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection (Romans 1:4). The resurrection bolstered Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.

Without having been raised, Jesus would have been an extraordinary man — but just that, a man.

He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

1 Corinthians 15:4



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is through His great mercy that God has given the Christian, by the new birth, a living hope (1 Peter 1:3). Hope is the catalyst that keeps the Christian faithful and working. The apostle Paul said this hope is *"the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:13 NIV). Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there would not be this living hope in our lives.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is entwined with our actions of obedience that save us. 1 Peter 3:21 declares that when we are saved by baptism in water, we are saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have to conclude that without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's plan of salvation would be incomplete. We assimilate the blessings of the death of Christ when we are buried into the water of baptism. Even so, we assimilate the blessings of His resurrection when we are raised with Him in our baptism.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ assures all men that we will be raised from the dead. Paul told the men of the Areopagus in Athens that God has given proof of the coming resurrection and judgment of all by raising Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 17:30,31). In speaking of our resurrection when He comes, Christ is called the first

fruits of those who belong to Him (1 Corinthians 15:22,23).

God, in His wisdom, planned for the resurrection and endowed faithful Christians with wonderful blessings by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. †

Windle Kee serves as the preacher for the Lord's church in Onalaska, Texas, USA.



FOREVER SHALL HE REIGN

**They crucified our Savior,
They cursed and mocked His
name;**

**What is His crime, Pilate asked,
For what is He to blame?**

**They nailed our Savior to a cross,
More insults they did fling;
Why can't He save Himself?,
they asked,**

If He be whom He claimed.

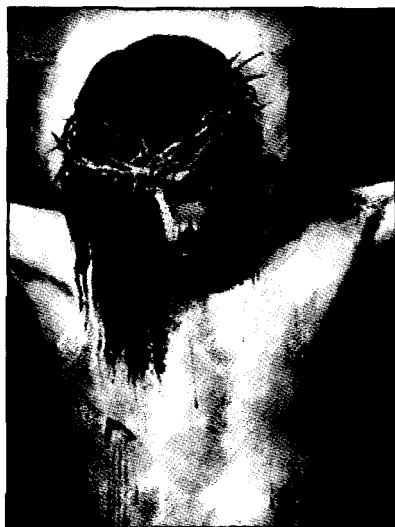
**They cast their lots beneath His
cross,**

**Believers wept in vain.
Jesus prayed for sinners lost,
He called His Father's Name.**

**He cried aloud, gave up the
ghost,**

**In terror they exclaimed,
"This Man was the Son of God!"
Forever shall He reign!**

— Sharon Davis



Jesus Christ, the Eternal Sacrifice

Betty Burton Choate

The Choice of Families

With our physical birth we had no choice about the family into which we would be born. After birth we were, literally, a part of that family and that one family only.

Spiritually, we do choose which family we will be a part of: God's or Satan's. But choosing, alone, doesn't make us a child of God. We must go through the process of birth into His family, being born of water and of the Spirit... baptism.

1 Peter 1:22,23 and 2:1,2 further clarify this spiritual birth:

*"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit ... having been **born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever ... Therefore ... as **newborn babes**, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."*

*"But as many as received Him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13).*

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise...and because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son

into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27 4:6,7)

The Continuation of Christ's Brotherhood

Many references in the Scriptures show the continued Father-Son relationship between God and Christ, after His ascension to heaven, making possible through our brotherhood with Christ our own relationship as children to God:

Jesus Christ was born in the flesh as the Son of God and the son of man. As the ascended Savior, He continues to be the Son of God and the brother of those who are born into His spiritual family. It is only through our brotherhood with Him that we can be called sons of God.

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8: 16,17). From eternity, according to John 1:1-14, the Word was with God and the Word was God, a statement showing equality in the Godhead. Yet when the Word emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7), and took human flesh, He subjected Himself to God as His Son, becoming the Firstborn of God and the Heir of God. It is only when we become the brothers and sisters of

Christ, by being born into His spiritual family, that we become the children of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

*"For both **He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one**, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them **brethren** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

*and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage Therefore, in all things **He had to be made like His brethren**, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:11,14,15,17).*

*"... **Christ as a Son** over His own house, whose house we are ... for we have become partakers of Christ...." (Hebrews 3:6,14).*

Just as Christ took on **human nature** in the emptying of Himself, His brothers become **partakers of divine nature** when they are filled with all the fullness of Christ!

"...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1: 3,4).

"...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3: 19).

God intends that those who love Him be "...conformed to the image of His Son..." (Romans 8:29).

"... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?...He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him...." (1 Corinthians 6:15,17).

So, the Lord Jesus has returned to heaven to continue His work of mediating for humanity. According to 1 Timothy 2:5, He sits at God's right hand as **the Man, Christ Jesus**. He is both the Son of God and the Son of man: our resurrected, transformed Redeemer. And spiritually, we are becoming "*partakers of divine nature*" in Him. †

Betty Burton Choate is the author of the study, *Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice*. This lesson, and the following lessons by sister Choate, will be taken from that book.

**HOW DO I WORSHIP GOD?
I REMEMBER
THE DEATH OF HIS SON.**

Sinners cannot approach the purity of God's person. All of us would be eternally banned from His presence, except for the fact that His only begotten Son, Jesus, died to pay the price for the sins of men. When we are born into the Family of God, into His church, our sins are washed away in the waters of baptism as we are 'buried into His death' (Romans 6:3-5).

Since we could have no spiritual life without Jesus' sacrifice, each first day of the week (Sunday) **Christians remember the cost of their salvation through a special memorial**. Jesus Himself "...took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28).

This very perishable-seeming memorial has survived for 2,000 years, honoring our Lord's sacrifice for sin. Each week, in remembering Him, we make a new commitment to God.

NEXT: I GIVE TO SUPPORT HIS WORK.

Cheap Grace

Reuben S. Emperado

In my reading, I came across an article in the *Gospel Light* magazine, in the section written by M. Norvel Young, entitled, "Observations...Reflections and Suggestions". The title of the article that caught my attention was "Cheap Grace". Let me share the following timeless article from the erudite pen of brother Norvel Young:

"For generations, preachers in the restoration movement have stressed the fact that we are saved by grace through faith, but that this faith is more than intellectual or emotional consent, that it is 'faith which works through love' (Galatians 5:6). Sometimes these preachers have been accused of not believing in grace, but of preaching salvation by works. In some cases, preachers may have left this impression, but a review of the writings of men like McGarvey, Larimore, Harding, and Brewer will show that repre-



sentative preachers did not teach salvation by man's works of righteousness. They did object to the popular protestant doctrine of salvation by grace through a kind of faith which does not involve obeying the commands of Christ.

"Recently I was surprised to find a strong argument against 'cheap grace' made by a leader in the German Confessional Church, Diertrick Bonhaeffer, in his book, **The Cost of Discipleship**. Needless to say, many of his ideas are not in harmony with the New Testament, but his stress on this point sounds like a pioneer preacher opposing the popular ideas of salvation without any response of faith such as baptism for the forgiveness of sin (Acts

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

2:38). He says: 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

"Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins as proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian "conception" of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins.

"Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church."

"Speaking of the reformation movement he says:

"Luther had said that grace alone can save: His followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word, but they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of a discipleship.' He continues: 'The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.

"It is under the influence of this kind of grace that the world has been made "Christian" but at the cost of secularizing the

Christian religion as never before.'

"Again he writes: 'But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves.' In another paragraph he says: 'We Lutherans have degenerated like eagles round the carcass of cheap grace and there we have drunk the poison which killed the life of following Christ.'

"Speaking of the relationship between faith and obedience, he writes: 'For faith is real **only when there is obedience**, never without it, and faith becomes faith **only in the act of obedience.**' Then he adds: 'Not only do those who believe obey, but only those who obey believe. In one case, faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other, obedience the condition of faith. If we are to believe, we must obey a concrete command. Without this preliminary step of obedience, our faith will only be pious and humbug, and lead us to the grace which is not costly.'" (*Gospel Light*, June 1967, page 89).

Let us never be guilty of cheapening the concept of grace by thinking it can cost us nothing. †

Reuben S. Emperado is a Gospel preacher, teacher, and radio speaker in Cebu City, Philippines.

SOUND DOCTRINE

Francis David

In the religious world today, we see attacks on sound doctrine. There are lots of doctrinal weaknesses prevailing in the world. People are accepting anything in the name of Christianity. The apostle Paul predicted this by saying, "*the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears*" (2 Timothy 4:3). Yes, the time has come. We see how many religious leaders are mishandling the word of God. They are trying to teach and preach things that are contrary to the Bible. The Bible should be handled rightly and carefully (2 Timothy 2:15).

People today want to hear things that are smooth and easy. It is just like during the days of the prophet Isaiah. In his day, people wanted him to "*Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits*" (Isaiah 30:10). Yes, there is no doubt that people want to hear smooth things in the name of religion. If you speak against adultery,

fornication, drunkenness, etc., they do not like it. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:2, "*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching.*" A true teacher of the Bible will never make a compromise with error. Preachers must take this responsibility very seriously, because they are accountable to God!

Gospel preachers must uphold sound doctrine. We must understand that sweet, polished words will not save the souls of men. Only the truth of the gospel will save us. We, the churches of Christ, are preaching and teaching the gospel through literature and any other means available. Our aim is to tell the message of Christ as it was told in the inspired word of God. The Bible speaks about the one church that Christ built (Matthew 16:18). It teaches that Christ is the head of this church (Colossians 1:18). We tell people that since He is the head of the body, the church, He is also the Saviour of the body (Ephesians

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5:23). This church is not a denomination. We teach about the body of Christ and His church because this is a true fact and true doctrine as found in the Bible.

What about the plan of salvation? We teach that there is only one plan of salvation based on the Scriptures. This plan includes **believing in Jesus** (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Acts 16:31), **repenting of one's sins** [turning away from a sinful life] (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 3:19; 2:38), **confessing Christ Jesus** as the son of God (Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:35-38), and **being baptized** (immersed in water) (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). This is the plan of God, based on the Bible.

Many may not like to hear it, but this is a fact!

What about worship? Our worship should be based on the Bible. No human traditions or man-made doctrines should be made a part of the worship. We read that "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). If our worship is based on man-made doctrines, then it is vain worship (Matthew 15:8,9). In our worship to God, we sing, we pray, we study the Scriptures, we remember Jesus' death by partaking in the Lord's supper (unleavened bread and grape juice). Acts 20:7 tells us that the disciples came together on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

bread. Now, if the memorial is monthly or bi-monthly or quarterly, it is not based on the Bible, and is, therefore, not sound doctrine.

We give of our means (offering) each first day of the week as we have been prospered, because this is what we read in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). This is entirely a free-will offering, because the Lord loves the cheerful giver, not one who gives grudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:6,7).

Our singing is without instrumental music, because according to sound doctrine, we need to sing and make melody in our hearts or minds (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The need of the hour is sound doctrine. We must emphasize, and I should say, we must re-emphasize it.

The church of Christ is the greatest institution in the world. The members of the church must abide by sound doctrine, and must teach and preach it as well. We are not supposed to add to or take away anything from the Scriptures. We need to teach it as it is. In Revelation 22:19 we read, "*if anyone takes away from the book of prophesy, God shall take away his part from the Book*

of Life..." John, while writing to Christians says, "*Whosoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son*" (2 John 9).

Do you abide in the doctrine of Christ? Have you accepted the doctrine of Christ? The doctrine of Christ is sound. Let us follow this sound doctrine. †

Francis David is a Gospel preacher in New Delhi, India.

It Will Safely Guide

Tho darkness often hides the way
On life's tempestuous sea,
There is a star whose shining ray
Will safely pilot me.

When earthly lights all fail to shine
Upon life's rolling tide,
I'll look to Heaven's star Divine
And it will safely guide.

It matters not how dark the night
Or how the winds may roar.
That star will always give its light
To lead me safely o'er.

Tho my celestial home is far
Across that raging foam,
God's Word will be my guiding star
To bring me safely home.

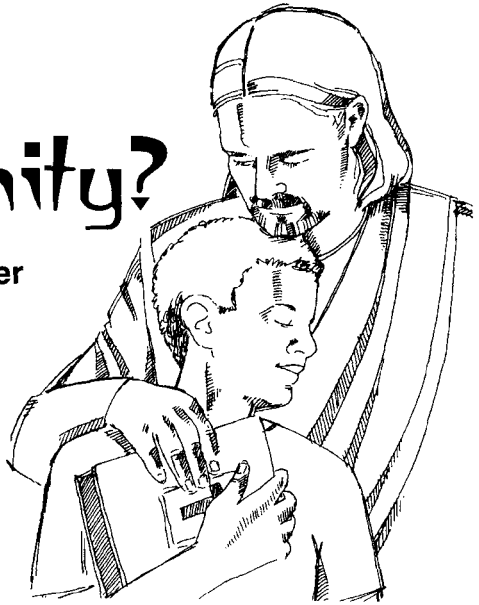
— Harry Presley

Why Christianity?

Wayne Barrier

The Bible states in Acts 11:26 that disciples of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch. Christianity today is the same as in the first century, the religion of followers of Christ Jesus of Nazareth. Is this religion actually credible and believable? Did Jesus really live and demonstrate anything worthy of use as the basis of religious faith, to influence our way of thinking and our behavior?

First, Christianity is based on the information of the Bible. Everything else written or said about this religion ultimately should have its basis in the Bible. The question then becomes a question of the credibility and truthfulness of the Bible itself. The Bible tells us about God, man's creation, God's role in human existence, the concept of righteousness from God's perspective, the scheme of redemption for man, the role of Jesus in man's salvation from his own failures, and the doctrines of Christianity.



Can we believe the Bible? There is no reason not to believe it. On the contrary, there are numerous reasons to trust Scripture. Although it is not a science, history, or geography book, Bible information in these areas is always accurate. Other writings are not always accurate, especially those written at the same time as the Bible.

The Biblical exploration of how our complex physical being and world came into existence is the most logical and understandable explanation available to us. Something didn't come from nothing. Superior intelligence, knowledge, power, and ability are the only

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

logical source of this world. Man didn't invent himself, and he is not capable of creating the universe, our complex planet, and all living things from nothing.

Secular writings verify many Bible events, characters, and Christ's life. Evidence continues to mount that the Bible is a Divinely inspired book unlike any other, which contains no inaccuracies, irrational teaching, or illogical concepts. The teaching of Christ, combined with apostolic and inspired writings, forms the basis of Christianity.

The cornerstone of this system of belief is that Jesus was resurrected from the dead following execution by the Roman government at the insistence of jealous Jewish leaders. This had been predicted for centuries in Bible prophecies. Considering that the whole concept of Christianity involves belief in God, an all-wise, all-powerful Supreme Being, it is not difficult to believe that God could bring about the resurrection of His Son from the grave. With this demonstration of Divine power and sacrificial love, it is easy to accept our role as necessary subjects of Christ and God. Christ died to offer us salvation and eternal life.

What about Christian doctrine? Again, the centerpiece of this aspect of Christianity is logical, rational,

and most beneficial to human existence. Jesus says in Matthew 22:36-40 that the greatest commandment of His teaching is to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The second most important "law" is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Everything else in Christian doctrine depends on these two "laws". What a wonderful basis for life and relationship with our fellow man and our creator!

Christianity is the religion of the Bible, a believable and understandable book of books. Christianity is validated by the power demonstrated by Jesus during His life and in His resurrection from the grave. Christian principles provide the best basis of living our life and preparing us for our next life. Christians are promised a home in heaven for eternity with God. Heaven is free from death, disease, disappointment, tears, and evil of any kind.

The price required to be a Christian was paid by the death of Jesus on the cross almost 2000 years ago (Ephesians 5:12). We need only to follow Him today and He will save us and reward us with eternal life in Heaven (Acts 2:36-38). The expectation of that eternal home is what Christianity is all about. †

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The Secret to Waking Up



the Few Potatoes

John Mark Wilson

Overcoming the Urge to Slip Back into the Potato Mode

There are five important things to do in order to keep one motivated and working. Some members will become discouraged and want to quit. If nothing is done to counteract this, the evangelistic fire will begin to fizzle out and eventually die.

Make a Progress Chart

A good idea to keep evangelism going is to be reminded how far you have come. A progress chart should be made

and either shown on an overhead projector or copied for all present so they can view their successes. The chart should contain the increased attendance, contribution and baptisms.

Appreciation Dinners for Workers

Another opportunity for encouragement is to have a special dinner for all personal workers. This provides opportunities not only for fellowship but also for sharing experiences, both good and bad, concerning what is succeeding or not working well.

Evangelistic Periodicals

Another profitable move is to sign up all personal workers to receive evangelistic periodicals and magazines such as *The Voice of Truth International*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Apologetics Press*, *Firm Foundation*, *Christian Courier*, *Gospel Gleaner*, *Spiritual Sword*, etc.

Study Courses

Another thing one can do is offer home study courses in personal

CHURCH GROWTH

growth and evangelism. Those involved in teaching the lost can complete a chapter a week in order to keep studying for themselves.

Help Recharge the Worn Out Pulpit Potato

The located preacher often wants and should be a leader in the effort for growth. This means setting the example for others to follow in Bible studies and hard work. When working in personal evangelism, one realizes rather quickly that it's an emotionally draining experience. The devil isn't going to give up his hold on people just because we want him to. At times it's tiring and patient work. Those involved with church growth will experience this first-hand and should find ways to show appreciation to the preacher and to each other for being leaders in the vineyard.

Overcoming the Urge to Slip Back into the Potato Mode

Part Two: Avoiding Burn-Out: We don't want any Fried Potatoes

Pray for Strength

An active prayer life should be encouraged. A program for growth is doomed to fail if God is not a major part of the planning. Not only should He be consulted in the beginning but He should be approached every day to gain strength and comfort. In Matthew 6:8 we learn *"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him...."* But we still must ask to receive them, according to Matthew 7:7, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."*

Step Back and Re-Focus

Sometimes it's good to step back and refocus your goals and schedule. We want to organize our day to allow time with family, the Lord and for much-needed rest. If some begin to feel burnout coming on, help them reorganize their schedule and add more time for rest and relaxation. God understands our physical limitations.

Spend Time with Spiritually Mature Friends

When we are drained emotionally from dealing with people who are sincere, but are sincerely wrong, or are spiritual babes, depending on us for leadership and example, retreat to a spiritually mature friend. Time spent with those who have the same spiritual maturity as yourself can greatly strengthen your resolve to head back into the trenches!

Overcoming the Urge to Slip Back into the Potato Mode

Part Three: Overcoming the “We’ve Arrived” Complex

When a congregation grows and people are at all different spiritual levels, it’s easy to want to stop working on growth and simply focus on those you currently have in Studies. But this is a grave mistake. Amongst the many different types of hearts who have begun attending the assembly, there is only one type of person who will obey the Gospel and stay — the good ground! Because of this, the congregation needs to keep bringing in more people than are saying, “No,” to the Gospel and leaving. True growth happens only when those coming in the front door exceed the numbers of those exiting out the back.

Keep Raising Attendance Goals

Whenever you reach a goal it’s good to celebrate in some way, but don’t ever stop reaching. A new goal needs to be set and everyone needs to immediately begin working on attaining that new goal. If people ever get comfortable again, they will slip right back into Potato Mode. We must never forget that souls are at stake — the ones we are teaching and our own.

Get New Members Involved

As the congregation begins growing, encourage those who obey the Gospel to assist mature members in Bible Studies. As they observe how the Gospel is presented, they will become aware that they can do this! When the new Christians are ready, help them set up steadies with their families and friends. Above all, help them to work in the vineyard soon after they obey the Gospel. They should be engaged in *some type* of instruction for their own continued growth as well as learning soul-winning methods and opportunities. In the next few lessons, a couple of one-time home Bible studies are provided to help get you started in personal work. Some charts will also be provided to show various points more clearly to the prospect. The charts have come from numerous sources through the years and are wonderful teaching tools. They are not original with me, and I take no credit. I would encourage you to design your own charts to use alongside these. Sometimes it’s easier for a person to understand a point when seeing a chart. By using them, your Bible study will become more effective.

Pew Potato Power Points

When a congregation grows and people are at all different spiritual levels, it's easy to want to stop working on growth and simply focus on those you currently have in Studies. Don't do that. Even spiritual growth and knowledge in the Scriptures are increased at a more rapid pace when Christians are involved in teaching others.

Questions

1. Why is a progress chart good?
2. What are some periodicals personal workers need?
3. Why is it important to keep raising attendance goals?
4. Why spend time with mature Christian friends?
5. Why is it important to put new members to work?

(Chapter seven of John-Mark Wilson's study book and work-guide, **The Secret of Waking Up the Pew Potatoes.**)

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A Perfect Congregation

I think that I shall never see
A church that's all that it should be;
With perfect people all around,
Without a blemish to be found;
With perfect elders, preachers too,
And perfect programs through and through;
And perfect budgets, perfect classes,
For men and women, lads and lasses;
Which never seems to have a care
And has new converts everywhere.
I wish the folks could perfect be,
Instead of flawed like you and me.
Except, among that noble race,
I'm sure that I'd feel out of place.

— Owen Cosgrove

Editor's Note:

We will conclude Dr. Grimm's very valuable and enlightening history of the Lord's church with this chapter which deals with his own story:

May I speak of myself as a connecting link of the Central European churches of Christ and the brethren and sisters of the English-speaking restoration movement? Hitler's henchmen in World War II tried to complete the destruction of the Lord's little flock. In

Persecution and Endurance

Dr. Hans Grimm

1933 all bishops and deacons of the churches of Christ on German soil were imprisoned in Konzentration-slager. In 1939 the adult members in East Prussia followed their shepherds into the prisons and hard-labor convoys, where they perished in 1944, and in 1942 the 11 Alsatian families were deported to Poland. There

they were massacred by the advancing Red tankists in January, 1945. All died with the same heroism for their Lord as their ancestors did.

I was born in 1899 at Sablon-les-Metz as a scion of one of the oldest Christian families between the Mosele and the Alps. My dear father was one of the last three bishops of the church of Christ in Strassburg, and I was immersed by my uncle in the icy waters of the Hanauer Weiher March 18, 1916. Trained in Strassburg, Konigsberg, and Hamburg Universities, I obtained a license in comparative history of religions. Imprisoned in 1933 by the Nazis for preaching the gospel in the face of a blasphemous government, I had to suffer almost two years in the concentration camps of Hammerstein and Lichtenburg, hunger, thirst, and the uninterrupted thrashing of arms, shin-bones, and head, like all other political, religious or non-Aryan prisoners. Released, deaf in one ear and with crushed kidneys, I continued preaching like my ancestors in woods, hills, and swamps or in hiding places in the large

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cities. I had to sell my special library and furniture to manage to live. When World War II began I was commissioned as an interpreter with the army.

Back in Leipzig on Christmas, 1945, I learned of my dear father's death, and from some survivors, the extermination of our churches in East Europe. I immediately took up the task of rebuilding the destroyed brotherhood, and I had to work hard as a proofreader, reporter, and lecturer to earn a living not only for me, but also for the old and sick brethren and sisters in Communist-ruled, famine-stricken and ravaged East Germany. I could say with the apostle "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34).

Just at the beginning of a remarkable revival of young people in Leipzig, and three months after my wedding, I was arrested October 9, 1948, by the Communists and for four years imprisoned in the ill-famed jails of Leipzig, Waldheim and Graefentonna. The pretended reason: conspiracy against the Red government in religious circles.

Released in the fall of 1952, I joined my dear wife in Western Germany. In March, 1955, the Protestant State Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck invited me to take over the office of president of the Evangelical Academy for Social Ethics in Kassel. I declined; I could not subscribe to the promise not to attack the teaching of the Confession of Augsburg.

But in the same month I met for the first time in my life a member of the restored churches of Christ of America. What he had to tell me was not other than the faith of my ancestors which I had taught and practiced all my life. My grandfather had had contacts with Scottish (Haldane) Baptists and Sandemanians, yea, even with Christadelphians in Birmingham, but the American Restoration Movement had been totally unknown to us. And now the fact that the Lord had built up his church beyond the Atlantic, just in time, when his last followers in Europe dwindled, hit me like a thunderclap. **The torch did not die out!** God had kindled it again and put it on a lamp-stand and it gives light for everybody in the house. This was the fulfillment of Christ's promise: I am going to build my church, and the powers of death will never prevail against it. †

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What Was It Like, Mary?



What was it like,
Mary,
To give birth to the
Lord our King?
Did He cry when the
cold night air hit His
skin?
Did He sleep through
the night or did you
have to calm Him
down?
Did Joseph rock Him
to sleep and sing to
Him in the stillness of
the night?
Did the Babe shy
away when the shep-
herds and wise men
arrived?

What was it like, Mary, to hold the Son of God?
Did He have soft smooth skin as babies do?
Did He respond to the touch of your hand?
Did He giggle when you tickled his feet?
Did He grab your finger and laugh?

What was it like, Mary, to raise the Lord our God?
Did you teach Him how to say "mommy" and "daddy"?
To give hugs and kisses?
Did you help Him when He was learning to walk?
Did you kiss His hurts and bandage His wounds?
Did you wipe the tears from His eyes and hold Him tight?

What was it like, Mary, to mother the Creator of the universe?

Did He know the names of the animals before you ever told Him?

Did He know the color of the flowers before you ever showed Him?

Did you ever try to count the stars in the sky together
And did He give you the exact number?

Did you ever take walks in the outdoors

And did it seem like He had been there before?

What was it like, Mary, to see the Lord our Savior grow up?

Did you cry the first time He walked, knowing He would never crawl again?

Did you miss His sweet coos when He started to talk?

Did you beam with delight when you saw His wisdom and stature?

Did your heart ache because you knew that your baby boy was Savior of the world?

Did you cry when He paid the price for the sins of mankind?

What was it like Mary?

To love; To care; To hold; To let go, To follow the Savior of the world?

— Mark T. Tonkery

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize
with our weaknesses,
but was in all points tempted as we are,
yet without sin.*

Hebrews 4:15

3 of the Hardest Words

Hershel Dyer

Some years ago, one of our popular magazines carried the following story. A four-year-old boy plucked a rose from a neighborhood yard and took it home to his mother. Inquiring as to where he had gotten it, she made him take it back and say he was sorry. This was not easy, since he had thought he was showing love to his mother. While the neighbor lady fed him a piece of cake, her husband went and cut a dozen roses. She then sent the little fellow home with the roses and a note which said: "Please accept these from a little boy who picked the wrong rose and the right mother."

It is not always easy to say, "I am sorry". Depending upon the person and the circumstances, these can be three of the hardest words which a person ever utters. Pride will often interfere with such an acknowledgment. These three words are a confession that one has been wrong or mistaken. A proud heart does not wish to own up to weakness or fault. Only when the heart becomes truly humble will these words sincerely come forth.

The wise questioning of this mother and her ready response made her worthy of the neighbor's praise. She was teaching her boy, in a hard way to be sure, that it is wrong to steal — to take without permission the property of another. She was also teaching him that doing wrong can have some unpleasant consequences.

Character begins to be formed very early in life. Moral precepts and the consequences of departing from these are so indispensable to good character. If the boy in the above account still lives, he became a man a good while back. It is doubtful that he will ever forget the lesson of his mother so early and so indelibly taught.

But we must also appreciate the graciousness of the neighbor who received the boy's apology. She could have said, "You're a naughty boy for stealing! Don't ever come into my yard again!" Instead, she accepted his apology and rewarded him for doing the right thing. †

Hershel Dyer is a gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

Whose Job Is It to Prevent Divorce?

Ronald D. Bryant

“An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” Preventing a tragedy is better than picking up the pieces after one. Preventing a divorce is possible, and it is reasonable. Whose responsibility is it to prevent divorce? You guessed it — the responsibility of preventing divorce is delegated to every married person. The following is a list of responsibilities to be recognized and honored by each marriage partner in the maintenance of his or her marriage.

1. **If you do not want a divorce, put your mate first.** Priority is to be given to your mate. Be a blessing to your children — love your mate. The greatest gift you can give your children is the security they will experience in a home where the parents love each other and dwell together in love and peace.
2. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to express love and devotion to your mate.** You have the right to shower your mate with love. You have the right to be devoted to your mate in the fulfillment of his or her needs. Learn from your mate what love and devotion mean to him or her.
3. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to value and esteem your mate.** Anyone can wreck a house, but it takes skill to build a home. It takes integrity and honor to build up one’s mate. Communicating acceptance and respect is central to maintaining marriage.
4. **If you do not want a divorce, learn the joy of togetherness.** Working together is your privilege. Playing together can be your delight. Being together can be a joy — if you will cultivate the spirit of adventure and sharing life. Mutual respect, care, interest, and devotion can be cultivated. Both you and your mate have the need for these, and on a daily basis.
5. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to focus upon common goals.** If a couple has a worthy goal and are working together to reach it, they will be together in thought and action. Daily responsibilities and schedules take you into different realms — therefore look for common ground in common goals.
6. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to listen to your mate.** Engaging

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in respectful conversation requires both talking and listening. No one likes to be ignored. Your mate will not be compelled to engage in verbal assault if you learn to listen. Put out a sign that says, "Small talk is appreciated". If you have the small talks, the more significant conversations will come easier. Tell your mate, "I love the sound of your voice", and then prove it by listening.

7. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to communicate with your mate from the heart.** Speak from the heart, revealing the things that are on your heart. No one can read your mind, and your mate wants to know what is on your heart. To speak from the heart and reveal your inner thoughts to your mate is vital in building intimacy.
8. **If you do not want a divorce, reject the temptation to run away from problems.** You have made a covenant to "keep yourself" — to be faithful to one another until death. "Cleave" to one another. You cannot do that if you run away. Determine to be "solution oriented".
9. **If you do not want a divorce, learn to apologize.** Unless you are the rarest of persons, you will make mistakes. Rule of thumb: When wrong, admit it. When you have offended, apologize! Remember: Next to "I love you", the sweetest words are "I was wrong — I am sorry — please forgive me." Sincere apology is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of maturity, love, and integrity. Forgiveness covers a multitude of sins.
10. **If you do not want a divorce, daily accept your marriage as a gift from God.** God gave you the capacity to love and to be loved. He gave you your marriage. Honoring Him in your marriage includes honoring your mate. Your first priority — share your life with God. Your second priority — share your life with your mate. Your third priority — share your life with your children. Your fourth priority — making a living. Your fifth priority — share your life with those about you.

From the Christian perspective, a husband and wife are to live together, before God, according to knowledge, in devotion to God and one another. They are to remember and cherish the fact that their marriage is God's arrangement. They have entered into covenant before Him. They are privileged to know the joys of marriage and are expected to fulfill the vows of marriage, in obedience and honor of God.

Marriages are made in heaven! The maintenance work takes place on earth! †

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Walking With Christ

Steve Vice

Have you ever taken a leisurely walk with someone you care about deeply? It seems like the birds sing a sweeter song, the foliage is a brighter green, the sky is bluer, and everything looks brighter.

Now imagine that you are walking with Jesus Christ. What would you notice? How would you view Him, yourself, and the world?

No doubt all of creation would seem even more majestic in the presence of its Creator. Your senses would be amplified, striving to take in every detail of such a great one who has called you His "friend" (John 15:14).

One thing that you would

notice about Jesus would be His care for those who walked with Him. When the multitude was hungry, He fed them. When the sick came to Him, He healed them. And all who walked with Him were taught the words of God.

Walk in the Light

If you would walk with Christ, you must walk in the light. Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

To walk in the light is to walk in the words of Christ. David said that the Lord's Word was a lamp to his feet and a light to his path



DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

(Psalm 119:105). Jesus' words will give you the light of life (John 6:63).

Walk in Agape Love

Your neighborhood continues to change, with old neighbors moving out and new neighbors moving in. But the second great commandment remains unchanged, *"to love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:39).

Jesus demonstrated agape love for His neighbors through His life of selflessness and His sacrificial death on the cross. There is *"no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13).

It is this same agape love with which Jesus has reached out to you that causes you to reach out to others.

Walk in Service

You were *"created in Christ for good works"* (Ephesians 2:10). When you neglect that service, then you are not walking in the purpose for which Christ created you. But when you walk in the good works, you will hear Jesus say to you, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34b).

Walking in faithful service to your Father provides that sense of purpose and fulfillment that you are searching for. It just makes you feel

good. Whenever you are feeling low, a guaranteed "pick-me-up" is to go out and do some good works for someone else.

Conclusion

Walking in the light, in love, and in service are necessary requirements for you who would walk with Jesus Christ. If you say that you are abiding in Christ, then you ought to walk just as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). This means that as you walk you will feed the hungry, help heal the sick, give comfort to the hurting, and share with others the life-giving Word of God.

As you walk with Christ, there is no condemnation for you (Romans 8:1); the blessings of the Father are upon you (James 1:25); and the blood of Jesus continually cleanses you from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Walking with Jesus brings peace, fulfillment, and contentment to your soul. It gives hope, not only of the resurrection of eternal life, but also for the life that you are now living (John 10:10).

Remember, it is your heavenly Father who is inviting you to walk with His royal Son: *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him"* (Colossians 2:6). What a great and high honor! †

Steve Vice works with the church of Christ in Forest Park, Georgia, USA.

Follow Me...

Hans J. Dederscheck

Many times Jesus used the expression "*follow Me*" (Luke 5:27), but he also frequently used the word "disciple". Christ invites people of all races and nations to follow Him, to be people willing to learn from Him. He said: "*Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19). Christians take their daily hardship and follow Christ.

Following the Son of God requires real discipleship (John 8:30-36). Christians need to learn from Jesus how to behave in this world, what to do to prepare their life for eternity (Ephesians 4:17-24). Christians should be fishers of men, bringing the Gospel of salvation to their neighbors and friends. The church of the first century grew because the disciples of Christ followed Jesus, teaching and making new disciples. The church in Rome was established by such unknown but enthusiastic followers of Jesus.

Following Christ means putting our confidence (faith) in Him, and doing His will. The Lord will strengthen us as we seek His kingdom and His righteousness first (Matthew 21:22; 6:32-34).

Christianity can never be a mere religion or a religious philoso-

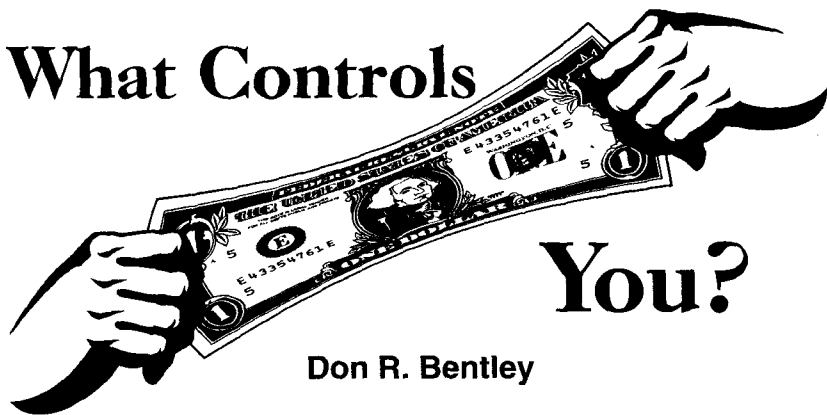
phy. Christianity is the way of life (Romans 12:1,2) taught by Christ, as well as Paul, and the other apostles. Christianity is a divine worldview which sets God and Christ in the center of our daily lifestyle. Words do not change our life, but following Christ's teaching can do that. Indeed, our life ought to be a continuous repentance, since we cannot deny that we are sinners and depend always on God's grace and mercy (Luke 13:1-5; Matthew 7:17-27).

A disciple learns from his Lord how to defeat this world, as Christ did (John 16:33). Disciples often have to face tremendous hardships and loneliness. We should never forget that the Lord is always with us to protect, guide, comfort, and help us. Jesus never abandons His brothers (Hebrews 4:15,16). No one can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38,39).

"Follow me" means following Christ's teaching and accepting His conditions for life and worship. Indeed, the life of a disciple of Christ should be a daily and everlasting worship to God, glorifying Jesus and God the Father. †

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What Controls



You?

Don R. Bentley

What subject do gospel preachers seem to avoid when preparing Sunday sermons? You don't know? Sure you do. Allow me to put it another way. How many sermons have you preached or heard on the subject of the "M" word — money? It's a topic that strikes a deathblow to the sermon preparation process. It seems to enter the self-imposed forbidden zone of "do not touch" topics. After all, one's finances are a very personal matter, right?

Be that as it may, money is often in control of our lives more than we might care to admit. It is not only a personal topic, but an emotional one as well. It can make us happy or sad. It can stir up our anger. It can make us nervous and unsettled. It can even temporarily relax us. Here are some questions to illustrate the point:

1. How do you feel when you get a twenty dollar bill inside your birthday card?
2. How do you feel when you read about some eighteen-year-old phenomenon making millions of dollars a year to hit or throw a leather-covered baseball?
3. What emotion is stirred up when you find out you owe Uncle Sam \$850.00 in back taxes?
4. Do you panic when your car payment of \$278.00 is due and you have only \$125.00 in the bank and haven't bought groceries yet?
5. Does going on a vacation with plenty of money in your wallet and a new car make it a relaxing experience?

The funny thing about it is that money is an inanimate piece of paper or

metal. It can't really do anything! So why does it put us all over the emotional road map? Maybe it's because we fail to completely understand two of the New Testament's most powerful statements concerning money:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Notice that it is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil, not the money itself. Perhaps we all have that root within us, waiting to receive water and nourishment. However, it can't produce the evil unless it is watered and nurtured on a regular basis. It will eventually decay in the unfertile ground of one's heart and die. The question is: do we water and fertilize the root regularly because we are failing to follow the second divine fact about money, that is, giving it to the church and the needy on a regular basis?

We are doing one or the other, giving money for Christ-centered reasons, or hoarding and spending it because of self-centered reasons. Those are the only two choices available. Your choice will determine if money is controlling you or you are controlling it.

If you are in control of your money, you are giving a portion of it from a cheerful heart to meet the needs of the church and the needy among us. Your motive is simply your love for Christ and your brothers. Then and only then are you relieved of the emotional roller coaster it can put you on. You are promised by our Lord to be blessed because you are laying up treasures in heaven. God has promised treasures that will last for eternity.

That is just the opposite of what the world is trying to shove down our throats. The worldly believe that it is more blessed to receive than to give. The logic goes, "The more money I earn and spend on myself at the mall or Wal-Mart, the more blessed I will be." The only problem with that line of reasoning is that somehow we never have enough of it to make us stay happy. Our happiness is based on our present circumstance and greed rather than the truth of Jesus' words.

An inquisitive newspaper reporter once asked Mr. Rockefeller, one of the richest men in the world at the time, how much money it would take for him to say he had enough. Mr. Rockefeller smiled and replied, "Just one more dollar, young man. Just one more dollar."

Yes, money is a very personal subject that some believe we should leave alone when preparing our sermons. But guess what — Christianity is a personal thing about a personal Savior and our personal choices. Our Lord put a bottom line on the subject, which wraps it up in a neat little package called our heart. Here is what He said: *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Luke 12:34).

What is controlling you? It depends on who is the love of your heart. We not only spend our time with the love of our heart, but our money as well. So which is it, love of self and money, or love of Christ and His church? The choice is yours, and so are the consequences. †

Don R. Bentley is a Christian living in Athens, Texas, USA.



How to Catch a Monkey

One of the oldest methods of catching monkeys is so simple you would seriously doubt its reliability, although it really works. A hunter merely cuts a small hole in a gourd, ties it to a tree, then places a few seeds inside the gourd. Soon a monkey happens by, and overwhelmed by curiosity, reaches through the tiny hole to explore.

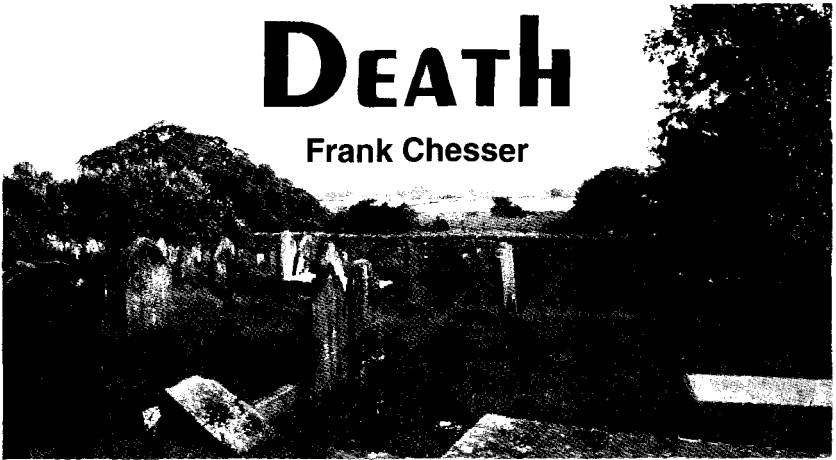
Feeling the seeds, he scoops them up in his hand and tries to pull his fist out of the tiny hole. To his dismay, he finds that he cannot free himself. He stubbornly refuses to let go of his “precious treasures” and keeps his fist closed until the hunter returns and captures him.

Oh, how pitiful to witness the thousands of people trapped by Satan using the same method. Satan baits the trap with material possessions, success, popularity, physical pleasure, social acceptance, and numberless other “precious treasures” that are so important to us. Then we, like little monkeys, grab and grasp and make tight little fists around our treasures, only to discover that we are trapped in an existence of worldliness. Jesus said we cannot serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

— Selected

DEATH

Frank Chesser



Life is a marvelous gift of divine grace. Life is so precious that God said, "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man*" (Genesis 9:6). However, nothing is more common to life than death. Ever since God said, "*thou shalt surely die,*" man has been preoccupied with death.

Death is a power. It is so powerful that no man can escape it. "*The way of all the earth*" (Joshua 23:14) is the way of death, for "*it is appointed unto man once to die*" (Hebrews 9:27). If a man possessed the wisdom of Solomon and the strength of Samson, he could not ward off the advancing hand of death.

Death is a mystery. Many things about life are mysterious. David marveled over the inscrutable

nature of conception and growth in the womb (Psalm 139:13-15). The ability of the mind to think, reason, and remember is an unfathomable thing. And yet, nothing about life is as mysterious as death. One can be alive and well one moment and lying still in death the next; in time today, in eternity tomorrow. No living man has walked through the gate of death and unsheathed its secrets (Job 38:17).

Death is impartial. It is impervious to age. Death will invade the womb, crib, playpen, school, factory, and nursing home. Wealth is of no concern to death. The pauper cannot beg off because of his poverty, and the millionaire cannot buy off because of his wealth. Death is insensible to one's social status. Social prominence impresses life, but not death.

Death is a tragedy for the unprepared. Sin is man's problem, Calvary is God's remedy, and Gospel obedience is the means of appropriating God's provisions of grace to the soul. Faithful adherence to the Divine Will insulates the soul from the condemnation of sin. The world is immersed in tragedy. However, the apex of tragedy will be to stand before God, having rejected the Gospel, or having reverted to the ways of the world.

Death is a blessing for the faithful. It is so glorious that no brush can portray it, no pen can depict it, and no tongue can describe it. Death for the Christian is a beginning, not an end; an entrance, not a closed door; a blessing, not a curse. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Preparation for death is the object of life. †

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Death

*Death is an empty chair at a table graced with food,
 Where once sat with fair countenance, the mate of one's youth;
 Death is a vacant space in the blackness of the night,
 A bed of one where two have lain in dreams of sweet delight,
 Death is the stilling of a mother's voice, her touch so gentle and kind,
 A child in throes of grief, healed only by God and time,
 Death is a room in quietness, its things so neatly placed,
 Where laughter once resounded, in children hard at play,
 Death is the earnest longing of a heart in chords of pain,
 That can never be eased with money, pleasure and material things;
 Death is the dawn of a day that shall never see an end,
 A day of joy and gladness, too immeasurable to comprehend,
 Death is an exit from pain and sorrow, an entrance into a home,
 Where God and light reign supreme, in the midst of Heaven's throne;
 Death shall be buried forever, in the graveyard of the past,
 And songs of love and gladness shall forever and ever last.*

—Frank Chesser



Husband: "Hello, Dear. How did everything go today?"

Wife: "Oh, I had a little argument with the water department."

Husband: "Who won?"

Wife: "Nobody. It was a tie. They don't get any money, and we don't get any water."



A man suddenly started feeling horrible and was sent to the hospital. The next day the doctor had a talk with the man's wife. He said, "Your husband has been suffering from serious stress. If immediate action is not taken, he could die in a very short time."

The woman replied, "What type of immediate action?" The doctor said, "You must provide a stress-free environment in your home. For the next two weeks, make wonder-

ful meals for him every day. Also, you must be sure that you don't nag him or stress him in any way."

On the drive home from the hospital, her husband asked, "So what's wrong with me, Honey?"

The woman paused for a moment, and then replied, "Sorry, Bert, but you're going to die."



Two female blondes were doing some carpentry work on a house. Dana, who was nailing down house siding, would reach into her nail pouch, pull out a nail, and either toss it over her shoulder or nail it in.

Donna, figuring this was worth looking into, asked, "Why are you throwing those nails away?" Dana explained, "When I pull a nail out of my pouch, about half of them have the head on the wrong end and I throw them away."

Donna got completely upset and yelled, "You moron! Those nails aren't defective! They're for the other side of the house!"



My doctor made me feel good the other day. He told me I have the body of a 35-year-old. Then he told me where the guy was buried.

PROVERBS 17:22

Two college students were talking:

Bob: "John, you look all broken up. What's the matter?"

John: "I wrote home for money for a study lamp."

Bob: "So what's the problem?"

John: "They sent the lamp."



A college football coach had recruited a talented player who couldn't pass the school's entrance exam. Needing the recruit badly, the coach went to the dean and asked if the recruit could take the test orally. The dean agreed, and the following day the recruit and the coach were seated in his office.

"Okay," the dean said. "What is seven times seven?"

The recruit mulled it over for a moment, then said, "I think it's 49."

Suddenly the coach jumped up. "Please, dean," he begged, "give him another chance."



A wife came home from work to find her house-husband crying over the kitchen sink. She said, "Honey, what's wrong?"

He said, between sniffles, "I...I dropped the ice cubes on the floor, and then I rinsed them off in hot water, and now I can't find them."

Child returning home from school, to parent:

"Boy, talk about a stressful day! We had a math test, a spelling quiz, and broccoli casserole for lunch!"



A husband and wife drove a long way in silence following a terrible argument in which neither would budge. The husband eventually pointed to a mule in a field and asked, "Relative of yours?"

"Yes," she replied, "by marriage."



My mother-in-law lacks quite a bit of being my favorite person, especially when she comes to visit for a few weeks. Today I picked her up at the airport. She's at the age where she doesn't remember things too well, so when I saw her I said, "Thanks for coming. Have a nice flight!"



Preacher: A person who talks in someone else's sleep.

Church: A place where you encounter nodding acquaintances.

Remember Now Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth

B. Arjunan

A man lives in three periods: childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The adolescent period is very important for it is then that he has to think and make a plan for his future. The Bible says, "*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth*" (Ecclesiastes.12:1).

You may think, "What new doctrine is this?" But read the verse carefully. It says, "*In the days of your youth...*" What does that mean? In our childhood we thought as a child. In youth, or adolescence, one may think as a youth, but he has gained enough maturity that he can analyze what is good and what is evil.

Thus, a youth can understand what he is about to do, along with the consequences, and act accordingly. But the writer of Ecclesiastes says that in our youth **we must remember who created us**. Up to this point in your life, you might have worshiped many gods or no god at all. But this is the right time to remember your Creator and to grow in an understanding of His wonderful plan about you. Through His word He will

teach you how to live in this world. The Lord has promised that if you will obey Him, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you..*' So we may boldly say: '*The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*'" (Hebrews 13:5,6).

If you learn His teaching and walk in His light, you will be blessed now and in the future.

"For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. 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" (Proverbs 3:2-6).

Moses, who led the nation of Israel through the wilderness, was brought up in the care of Pharaoh's daughter when he was a child. In his youth he came to know who he was — that he was an Israelite — and who his Creator was — the God

of heaven. As soon as he understood about himself and about his Creator, he chose "...rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Heb.11:25,26).

Like Moses, identify God your Creator and identify His people and try to live with them and serve Him.

From the time of our youth, there are many dangerous temptations. We must listen to the warnings of those who are older and wiser than we, in order to avoid suffering great harm. Solomon wrote that he saw a young man void of understanding,

"Passing along the street near her [an immoral woman's] corner; And he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, Her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner.

"So she caught him and kissed him; With an impudent face she said to him: 'I have peace offerings with me; Today I have paid my vows. Come, let

us take our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; He has gone on a long journey....'

"With her enticing speech she caused him to yield; With her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks....

"Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death." (Proverbs 7:8-27).

Nowadays many young men go as an ox goes to the slaughter. They fall into sins and they are caught by diseases like AIDS. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon has written about the way of death. Remember! Your future will be according to your choice.

Listen to Paul's advice to Timothy: *"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife"*

(2 Timothy 2:22,23). Youthful lusts will take you to everlasting destruction. So flee those temptations, and join with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Joseph, the son of Israel, was a young man. Since his father loved him more than all his children, his brethren hated Joseph, and they sold him to the Ishmaelites. The slave traders brought Joseph into Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's and captain of the guard. *"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. ... And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, ... '...How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' ... and [he] fled and ran outside"* (Genesis 39:2-13).

O, young man, when you flee like Joseph, you will be blessed like him.

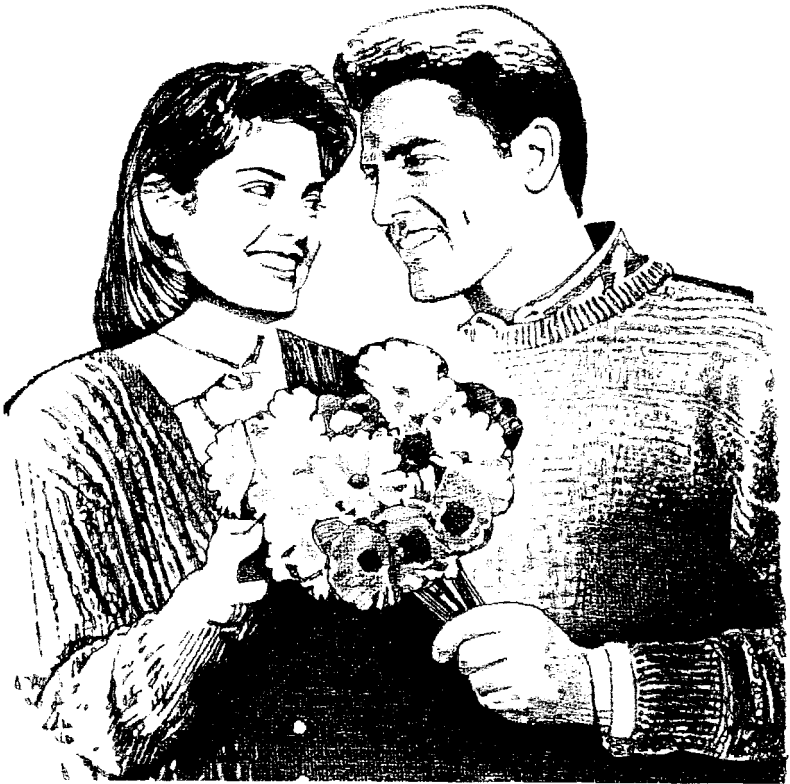
Let's remember the question and advice given by David, *"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word"* (Psalm 119:9). The young

David also made the Lord as his refuge and his fortress. *"Then David went on and became great, and the LORD of hosts was with him"* (1 Chronicles 11:9). If you remember your creator, you will grow greater and greater like David. The Lord also will be with you.

Dear young men, and young ladies, the days of your youth are not endless. They are little more than a breath of time, but the person you become in your youth will have much to do with shaping your entire life. The way you think and behave in your youth will set your feet on a path that will grow into adulthood. If you obey God you will be spared much sorrow and trouble.

So I beg you, **in your youth don't forget your Creator.** Moses, Joseph, and David remembered and loved the Lord and enjoyed many blessings at His hand. You should also remember your God. Know Him and understand His will for you by reading His words in the Holy Bible. Accept Jesus as your Lord, who was sent to the world as the Savior. He will deliver you from all your youthful lusts. And then find His Church and worship your God — your Creator — with His people. †

B. Arjunan is a preacher of the Gospel in South India. He edits a monthly magazine, and has a weekly TV program and radio program.



The Bible and Sexuality

Tom Steed

The media is currently filled with information about sexual abuse by priests in the Catholic Church. The abuse and cover-up that have taken place are a disgrace to that organization and to activities undertaken in the name of Christ. The teaching that requires celibacy for those who serve as spiritual leaders

in Catholicism is a false and misguided doctrine. Paul did say that if one possessed the ability for celibacy, it was a gift that could be used to serve the Lord, especially in times of persecution and difficulty. So voluntary celibacy is not wrong, but a celibate life is not what God planned from the beginning.

ETHICS

However, concerning these news-making revelations involving Catholic priests, we would be wrong to assume that abuse and sexual impropriety have occurred only among Catholics and never in other religious groups. Anyone, regardless of his religious affiliation, can fall prey to temptation and, thus, fall into sin. Obviously, imposed celibacy increases the likelihood of engaging in illicit sex.

There are two conclusions concerning the Bible and the subject of sexuality. First of all, sexuality is a gift of God, and a wholesome aspect of our nature. Second, God regulates and limits our sexuality in ways that benefit those for whom the gift was intended.

The Bible consistently speaks of our sexuality as something ordained by God. In the beginning, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He created woman to complement man and form a loving pair. God pronounced that this arrangement was good. The first sin was simple disobedience to the commands of God, not sexual activity. After the fall, Adam and Eve were told to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. In several places in the Old Testament, the writers, inspired by God, comment on the physical beauty of the characters. Marriage is to be honored by all (Hebrews

13:4) — wives and husbands are to fulfill their duties to each other (1 Corinthians 7).

Notice that all these relationships are to be heterosexual and monogamous. God regulated sexuality by forbidding adultery as one of the Ten Commandments. Old Testament law forbade incest, homosexuality, and other aberrations. Jesus not only forbade adultery but, as He did in many other areas, He sought to go to the heart of the problem by condemning lust as well as actual physical transgressions.

Sexual sins can be forgiven, just like any other. In the Corinthian church there were people who were guilty of gross sexual immorality and Paul, as he condemned the errors, said, *“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Sexual sin is no worse than other sin, with the exception that it warps and often destroys the lives of innocent people who become victims of the sin, rather than partakers in it.

In order to preserve the beauty and sweetness of sexuality, as God intended it to be, let us abide by His regulations. †

Tom Steed is the preacher for the church of Christ in Carbondale, Illinois, USA.

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

During times of trouble you may have asked the question “WHY is this happening to me?” A simple change of Y to O in the word WHY makes a profound difference. The word then becomes WHO. The question changes to “WHO is in control?”

God showed Job that He could provide better comfort by answering WHO rather than WHY. He assured Job that He had created all things, that He was greater than the problems in the lives of humans, and that He was still in control of the entire universe.

Changing Y to O

Johnie N. Jenkins

One of the oldest books in the Bible suggests that we change “y” to “o”. The book of Job is not about *WHY* good men suffer. **It assumes this as a given.** Instead, the book is about *God* and about *WHO* is in control. God allowed Job to wrestle with the question of why he was suffering. He didn’t answer that question for him! He ignored all of Job’s doubts and challenges, but He raised other and better questions that provided Job with all the assurance he needed.

Job was demanding an answer to *WHY?*, but God showed him that he was wrong in his attitude and wrong in his question. There is a vast difference between wrestling with the *mystery* of *WHY*, and demanding to know the answer.

In Job’s deep grief and sickness, it seemed to him that God had abandoned him, and — worse still — that God was bringing all the evil upon him. Never once did he consider the fact that Satan is at war with God’s faithful people. Never once did he look to the source of evil as the explanation for the terrible things he was suffering. Instead, he doubted God, challenged God, and he forgot that God is not required to give an accounting to anyone.

Too often in our lives today, when troubles come, we forget that Satan is out to destroy God’s children, and we make the mistake Job made, wondering, “*WHY* is God doing this?” Troubles come for many reasons — some, of our own

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

making — some, because of the fault of others — and, some, because of Satan's plans to discourage and hurt us. But God can use every problem to teach us vital lessons of trust in Him, helping us to grow spiritually through the very tools Satan would use to destroy us.

When we do find ourselves in troubling situations with questions of, "Why is this happening to me?" we need to remember that God showed Job that a better question was, "*WHO* is in control of what is happening?" Through the many deep and unanswerable questions God hurled at Job, He drove home the fact that not only had He created the universe, but that He was still busily engaged in everything that was happening.

God is the ultimate and supreme power. He has authority over everything. Even Satan can do only what God allows. God supplied a better answer to Job by showing him that even if He explained *WHY* Job was allowed to suffer, he would not understand the answer. God's power and wisdom are beyond man's understanding.

At the end of God's questions, Job replied, "*I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked who is this that obscures my council without knowledge. Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too*

wonderful for me to know.My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2-5).

When Job understood that God was still in control and that His ways were higher than man's ways, he was convinced that to know *WHO* is in control is better than knowing *WHY* things were happening to him.

And, in our lives, even though God allows us to struggle with the *WHY* question, He suggests that we also ask the question "*WHO?*" God is glorified when righteous men faithfully serve him during struggles and trials. Psalm 116:15: "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*"

Revelation 2:10: "*Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*"

Jesus said that the very hairs of our heads are numbered, and that God is aware of every sparrow that falls. If He is concerned about such seemingly unimportant things, how can we doubt that He is concerned about the welfare of His children? †

Johnie N. Jenkins is an elder in the Lord's church.

Overcoming Discouragement

Roger Johnson

“Do you ever feel downhearted or discouraged?
Do you ever think your work is all in vain?
Do the burdens thrust upon you make you tremble?
And you fear that you shall ne’er the victory gain?”

Well, it is fairly certain that you occasionally do, for discouragement is a very common ailment! Perhaps you have had a spirit kindred to Elijah who felt all alone in his struggles (1 Kings 19:8). There was a time in David’s life when he reached the point of despair, but he came out of it. How was he able to overcome his discouragement? Notice the antidote David applied to his life: *“And David was greatly distressed ... but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God”* (1 Samuel 30:6).

What can be gained from the context of this passage that will help us overcome discouragement?

1. Get alone in the PRESENCE of God. David did that as he *“inquired of the Lord”* (1 Samuel 30:8). This is the first step we must take if we are to cast off discouragement. Get into the presence of the Lord and tell Him everything... *“casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you”* (1 Peter 5:7). There is wonderful relief and release even in the process of telling God of our discouragement.

2. Seek the fellowship of the PEOPLE of God. David went to Abiathar the priest (1 Samuel 20:7). There is great value in sharing our joys, sorrows, and discouragements with others who are like-minded with us. If you are discouraged, try encouraging someone else, and it will help make your own discouragement disappear.

3. Lean hard upon the PROMISES of God. David depended upon God in this dark moment. Notice the words, *“Thou shalt surely ... without fail ...”* (1 Samuel 30:8). There are many promises which God has made to us, and they are all *“yea and amen in Christ Jesus”* (2 Corinthians 1 :20) —

COMFORT AND REASSURANCE

not one of them has ever failed, nor will one of them ever fail (Mark 13:31)! Is there anything, anywhere, that will more quickly banish discouragement than God's wonderful promises?

4. **Remember the PROVIDENCE of God.** Although David was passing through a time of upheaval, of loss, of distress, and discouragement, yet God was silently planning in love for him (read 1 Samuel 30:11-16). We must never forget God's ability to make "*all things work together for good*" in our lives (Romans 8:28).

"His love in time past
Forbids us to think
He'll leave us at last
In trouble to sink."

†

Roger Johnson lives and works in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

Be Grateful

Be grateful if your job is a little harder than you like. A razor cannot be sharpened on a piece of velvet.

Be grateful for the doors of opportunity – and for friends who oil the hinges.

If you cannot be content with what you have received, be grateful for what you have escaped.

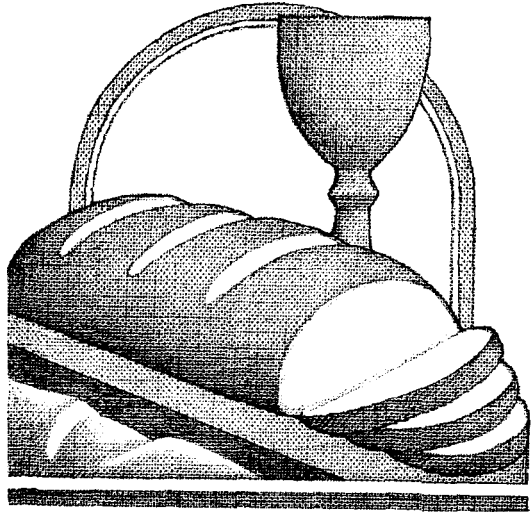
Be grateful for children even when they are a headache – they are still a heritage from the Lord.

Be grateful for the truth even when it stings, for it is the truth that makes you free.

– Selected

A Memorial to the Lord

Vance Hutton



Most countries of the world have established some specific days during each year when the people pay tribute to those who have sacrificed themselves for the benefit of their fellow citizens. It certainly is fitting and proper and good that such be done. So much is owed by so many to so few.

But, each Lord's Day we observe a memorial to the Lord. It too is fitting, good, and proper for such to be done. The Bible refers to this memorial as the communion, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, and as breaking bread. May we notice a few important matters relating to this memorial to our Lord.

1. The Purpose of the Lord's Supper: Oh, how easily

and quickly we forget! We forget God (Jeremiah 2:32), and we can forget our purging from sin (2 Peter 1:8,9). The Lord simply said to eat this supper in remembrance of Him. We remember His suffering for us (1 Corinthians 11:24). We have been bought with blood. Never forget it. Partaking of the Lord's Supper is a time of examination, communion with the Lord, discernment of this sacrifice, and proclamation of the Lord's death until He returns. Lest we forget, may we be led to Calvary each Lord's day.

2. The Partakers of the Lord's Supper: Since Jesus promised to eat this supper with His disciples in His kingdom, partakers are to be citizens of the Kingdom

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(Luke 22:29,30). It is for those who are in the kingdom, the church of our Lord. It is for those who have been born anew and have thus entered the kingdom (John 3:3,5). It is for saints and faithful brethren (Colossians 1:1,2). To commune with the Lord one must be of such character that God will accept his worship. Simply put, people must be faithful children of God in order to partake of the Lord's Supper.

3. The Principles Pertaining to the Supper: Remember that the memorial is a command for children of God, a command we must obey. One is to meditate and remember the suffering our Lord endured. There is to be communion or fellowship, participation, and intimacy with the body and blood of Jesus. One is to look within in examination of himself. One is to partake in a worthy manner, or else one eats and drinks damnation to himself. One is proclaiming the necessity of the Lord's death to the world. He is to partake on the first day of every week (Arts 20:7). One should be regular and consistent in the memorial.

4. The Perversions of the Lord's Supper: Some neglect and

forsake it without heart. Some pervert it by seeing it as more important than the other acts of worship. Many partake with their spirit far from communion with the Lord. Some partake of it at weddings, others have changed its names, and some have substituted its elements. Some have changed the day, and others the frequency for observance. Parents have had their non-Christian children to partake and some have broken fellowship over the containers for the fruit of the vine.

5. The Power of the Lord's Supper: There is great power in meditation and resolve of heart (Luke 15:17). Abusing the Supper led some at Corinth to be weak, sickly, and asleep spiritually. Think how many people's lives have been held together because of the power of the communion. There is awesome power for transformation in surveying the wondrous cross each Lord's day. The old song says, "Feast divine all else surpassing, precious blood for you and me, while we sup, Christ gently whispers, do this in my memory." †

Vance Hutton is the preacher for the church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

"For we, being many, are one bread and one body, [or we are all partakers of] that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

The Vitality of Worship

Clarence
DeLoach, Jr.



There isn't anything that will substitute for true, spiritual worship in the life of the church. What it does for the church collectively and for each Christian individually is life-changing. A church not growing in quality, God-ordained worship is a church not growing, period.

We are not talking about ritual, formality, routine, and tradition that become mindless and meaningless. Nor are we talking about emotional, fanatical, ecstatic, feeling-oriented activity that saps you. We are talking about worship that is faithfully committed to the Word of God, worship that seeks to discover its truths — that meditates on God with a true and sincere heart.

True worship glorifies God. Worship "sanctifies God" in those

who draw near to Him (Leviticus 10:3). God is set apart and glorified in true worship.

Right worship purifies the worshipper. Those who stand before Him need clean hands and pure hearts (Psalm 24:3,4). Drawing nigh to God motivates a willingness to confess our sins and come with a penitent heart. The result will be forgiveness and transformation. The church is not made up of perfect, elite saints who come to parade their piety, but weak and humble hearts who seek God's power in healing their souls and lives.

Acceptable worship builds the church. The first church was first a worshipping church (Acts 2:42), then a growing church (Acts

2:47; Acts 5:28). Worship made Jerusalem a winsome, attractive church. True edification is not some momentary emotional high, but commitment and transformation. If you are not being changed by your worship, then there is something amiss in the worshipper or the worship itself.

Quality worship impacts the lost. Every God-ordained act of worship, when entered into sincerely by Christians, will have a powerful effect upon unbelievers who may be in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:23-25). Many an alien sinner has walked down the aisle to obey God because of the hearty singing, fervent praying, and powerful preaching in the service. What an impact there is in one hour of loving, sincere, heart-felt, God-honoring, truth-seeking worship! And what a contrast such worship is to the tendency today to entertain attendees, rather than to draw them into an attitude of humble prostration before God.

Don't just attend the service — **worship.** God will be glorified. Christians will be cleansed. The church will be built up. And the lost will be won.

What can be of greater benefit than that? †

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What If Jesus Came to Our Congregation?

What if Jesus came into our next assembly?

Where would He sit?

What would He say?

What would you say?

What would you wear?

How would you act?

How would you
worship?

“That will never happen,” you think. Yet, in Matthew 18:20, Jesus said, “Where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.”

Jesus has already been here! The question is: **How will you act the next time you are in worship — with Jesus by your side?**

—Bulletin Digest



Worshipping at Home

John Thiesen

Sometimes we hear people ask the question, "Why can't I worship God just as well at home by praying privately and listening to sermons on radio and television? Why should I attend church services?"

Those who ask this question are usually ones who do not meet with others to worship God publicly. They want to be counted as Christians, but they do not want to be a part of the church and its corporate worship.

It is true that we can worship God in our homes. In fact, the Lord

wants us to. The Christian life is one of daily worship and service to God in many ways. Jesus taught that "*men ought always to pray and not to faint*" (Luke 18:1). Paul told Christians to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

There is nothing in this world as important to our salvation as a life walked daily with Christ. If He is our constant companion and we are found taking our requests and problems to God in prayer, this is exactly what God desires of us. In this Christian age, there is no partic-

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ular geographical spot or building which is holy. Christians are on holy ground at all times as God surveys their hearts 24 hours a day. We do not have to hurry off to the church building before we can pray.

On the other hand, we cannot live acceptably to God if we avoid worshipping and working with other Christians. We sin when we do this. This is because the Christian life is not only one of individual relationship to God, but also a collective, cooperative walk with other Christians. It was said of the church which Christ established in Jerusalem that the disciples continued steadfastly "*in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). The word "fellowship" means sharing with one another in a common cause.

Since its beginning, there have been those who have stayed away from the public assemblies of the church. Christians are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Hebrews 10:25). God has decreed that His people work and worship together. Several acts of worship were designed by Him to be performed together by His people, such as partaking of the Lord's Supper, singing together, and taking up a financial collection for the Lord's work. Peter called the church "*an holy*

nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Those who stay home and avoid the church's worship services are not doing this. Since they are doing what unbelievers do when the doors of the church building are open — that is, staying away — they are not showing forth the praises of God.

We shall reap what we sow. If we live as the world does, we shall share the world's fate in the judgment. If we live as God wants, we shall inherit eternal life. But we can't sow one thing and reap another. We must make up our minds to follow Christ first. We can't have one foot in the kingdom of God and another foot in the kingdom of Satan.

In conclusion, Christians cannot deliberately choose to stay home without good reason when the church is worshipping and still be pleasing to God. By all means, we should be worshipping God in our homes as well, but when the saints are assembled, and we deliberately absent ourselves, our prayers will not be acceptable to Him because we have been disobedient. †

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RESTORING TRUE WORSHIP

Kevin L. Moore

Upon the completion of the Jerusalem temple — the center of Jewish worship — Solomon reminded the Israelites that God is worthy of adoration and praise simply because of who He is and because of all that He has done (1 Kings 8:56-60). Then the king declared: “*Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day*” (v. 61, NKJV). Solomon’s plain, yet

solemn, admonition highlights what is reiterated throughout scripture, namely the two fundamental requirements for acceptably approaching the throne of God: (1) **heart wholly devoted to Him**, and (2) **humble obedience to His revealed will**.

At the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam took the throne and attempted to rule with an iron fist, inciting a rebellion that led to the eventual division of the nation.

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Nebat's son, Jeroboam, took control of the northern kingdom and did not want his people worshipping in Jerusalem and potentially being influenced to turn against him. He thus devised more convenient and innovative forms of worship in their own land, including new sacrifices, feasts, images, shrines, and priests (1 Kings 12:1-33).

The years that followed witnessed nineteen consecutive evil kings and a sustained digression in the northern part of the kingdom that had come to be called "Israel". Consequently the LORD allowed the Assyrians to conquer and exile the northern Israelites, and their land was repopulated with pagans from various Gentile nations (2 Kings 17:5-24).

The chief complaint of these new inhabitants was that they did not know "*the rituals of the God of the land*" (v. 26), so an Israelite priest was repatriated to teach them how to worship the God of Israel (vv. 27,28). The intermingling of these new settlers with a remnant of the former populace resulted in what came to be known as the Samaritan race, whose worship was a mixture of God-revealed worship and man-made worship (vv. 29-41).

A few centuries later, as Jesus of Nazareth passed through this land, He encountered a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-18). After a brief

discussion about "living water" and morality, the conversation turned to the topic of worship (the term is used eight times in vv. 20-24). As the woman enquired about the rightful place of worship (Mt. Gerazim or Jerusalem?), Jesus informed her that the **place** of worship would no longer be as important as **how** one worships. As a matter of fact, the Samaritans were essentially worshipping in ignorance, while the Jews at least worshiped according to God's revelation (v. 22).

The mention of "true" worship (v. 23) naturally implies the converse reality of false worship. Yet the Samaritans were not the only ones who had it wrong. When Jesus said that true worshippers "will" worship the Father, He subtly indicated that neither the Samaritans nor the Jews, for the most part, were currently doing it correctly. In fact, when Jesus later applied the words of Isaiah 29:13 to Jewish scribes and Pharisees, He exposed their disregard for the fundamental requirements for acceptably worshipping God. Neither their hearts nor their teachings were in line with the divine will (Matthew 15:1-9).

Alternatively, Jesus goes on to explain to the Samaritan woman that the two essential elements of faithful worship are "*spirit and truth*" (John 4:23). The human spirit is elsewhere described as the

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inner person or the heart, including one's thoughts, intentions, attitudes, and motives (cf. Romans 1:9). The *truth* is equated with God's revealed word (John 8:31,32; 17:17). Jesus was simply restoring worship to what it was originally intended to be. The importance of this is shown further by His repetition of these directives in v. 24, stating that one **must** worship accordingly to be regarded as a true worshiper.

Today we still need to be concerned about restoring worship according to God's design. Many, like Jeroboam of old, are discontent with the worship of days gone by and call for a more convenient, exciting, or even entertaining style of worship. In a misguided attempt to generate deeper spirituality, certain ones naively think that changing the outward forms of worship is the answer. While changes, within the scope of Biblical example and teaching, are good and necessary, additions, subtractions, and substitutions for the divine pattern are not. Genuine spirituality is simply not developed from the outside in.

There are others, however, like the early Samaritans, who seem to be chiefly concerned about "the rituals of the God of the land" and are satisfied as long as the correct externals are in place. But simply going through the motions — even the right ones — is meaningless without

dedicated, reverent, worshipful hearts.

The Bible presents a balanced approach — worship that is pleasing to God both internally and externally. True Christian worship involves observing the Lord's supper with the proper focus, praying and singing with the right spirit, reflectively hearing the word of God, and giving with purposeful and cheerful hearts (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 14:15; Romans 10:8; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

If one is truly seeking the Lord and sincerely desiring to please Him, the simple forms of worship revealed in the New Testament will not only be sufficient, they will be all that one wants to bring to the heavenly throne as worship is offered in spirit and truth.

Let us avoid the mistake of the ancient Samaritans of only caring about external "rituals" without having hearts dedicated solely and completely to the Almighty.

Let us also avoid the error of Jeroboam and his successors of changing the forms of worship which God has revealed, sanctioned, and authorized.

May we approach our Creator only as He desires, with genuinely devoted hearts and uncompromising allegiance to His immutable word. †

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CHRISTIANITY

Among the world's more than six billion people are innumerable religious beliefs. Most profess faith in a "god", calling him by different names and trying to serve him in many different ways.

Someone has said that there must be a gene in humans that causes us to believe that there is a god, because humans throughout the world and throughout time have held some sort of belief.

It is not a physical gene that attaches humans so strongly to God but, rather, it is the fact that within the human body lives an immortal soul. That soul identifies with its life-source — with God — and is endlessly reaching out to Him.

Who is that eternal Spirit, that God for whom all of us seek? How can we know Him and please Him? We want to answer some of these questions that haunt humanity.

"AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS, WHAT IS TRUTH?"

QUESTION: How can we know **who is the true God?**

ANSWER: Since God is Spirit and we cannot see Him, we must learn about Him through **His written revelation** of Himself and the **effects of religion** in the lives of people.

QUESTION: How can we know **which book is from God?**

ANSWER: To answer that question, several things must be considered:

1. **Does the book teach or allow the worship of images as God?** Common

sense tells us that lifeless images made by humans cannot be our Creator. The Bible says *“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’ ...[A man] plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.*

“He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, ‘Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire.’ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, ‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’” (Isaiah 44:6,14-17).

2. Does the book allow the worship of humans as gods? Humans are created beings, blessed with immortal souls, but we are not God and it is wrong to elevate any human to the level of God and to worship him. The Bible forbids the worship of any man or any image (Revelation 19:10; Exodus 20:1-5).

3. Many religions of the past have died because their message and beliefs were not relevant to changing times. If a book must be revised to correct errors or to fit current needs, it cannot be from God. The Bible says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

4. Even though it is a book dealing with spiritual matters, is it correct in areas that touch on history, science, and prophetic revelation? If a book, claiming to be a revelation from God, contains errors in these points that can be tested, how can it be a reliable guide in spiritual and eternal questions? If a book is mythical in nature, how can we trust it to teach the truth about God? The Bible contains countless historical details. **It has been used as a guide for archeological searches and has been proven to be accurate in every challenge men have made.**

Scientifically and medically, the Bible has revealed many things that no human knew at the time the message was written. Hebrews 11:3 states a scientific fact, *“the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”* In the first century, when these words were written, there were

no microscopes enabling people to examine atoms and sub-atomic particles — not visible to the naked eye — which make up everything we “see”. But the Creator God knew, and He told the writer of Hebrews what to write, even though that man did not understand the meaning. Today, with advancement in science, we do understand, and we can see that the Bible is scientifically accurate.

When the book of Psalms was written, no human knew about the scientific fact that there are “paths” in the sea, yet the writer said by inspiration, *“You have put all things under his [man’s] feet, ... The birds of the air. And the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas”* (Psalm 8:8). When the book of Job was written, no human knew about the scientific fact that the earth was resting on nothing visible. By inspiration, Job wrote of a scientific truth that even he did not understand: *“He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.”* (Job 26:7)..

Hundreds of **prophetic statements** are made in the Bible that have proved to be absolutely accurate. Centuries before their actual completed fulfillment, **Daniel wrote by God’s direction that there would be four world empires** (Daniel 2), and that **the kingdom of God would be begun in the days of the fourth empire.** The fulfillment of this prophecy is in the empires of the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, borne out in detail by historical records. **Jesus was born in the days of the Roman Empire,** and it was immediately after His death, burial, and resurrection that the kingdom of God on earth — the church — was established. True to the prophecy, within that first century, the church had spread throughout the world (Colossians 1:6).

The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were described in more than 300 prophecies, made hundreds of years before His birth. These prophecies were fulfilled in exact detail, a fact that could be possible only because He is who He claimed to be: **the Son of God, born in the body of a human in order to provide the way for sin to be forgiven and for man to be reconciled to God.**

5. If a book’s teachings are followed exactly, will society be made better or worse? Without fail, every religion contains some truth in its teaching, but religions created by men also teach much error. This error is destructive when it is followed in life. Some religions teach witchcraft, the power of voodoo practices, and evil spells cast by witchdoctors.

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Others teach human sacrifice to idols, the worship of rivers, the earth, the sun and the moon. Some teach that women are inferior and that no one can be saved in the body of a woman.

Did you know that, through the centuries, there were many “barbaric” practices in pagan religions: infanticide, exposure (especially of) female babies, child abandonment, abortion, human sacrifices. Women often had no legal rights. If a husband wanted to divorce, or even kill his wife, in many cultures it was not a crime. Girls were married while no more than children. Women were burned on their husband’s funeral pyre, or if the widow was allowed to live, she was often severely abused and starved. Slaves had no more rights and protection, legally, than an animal.

Humanists and atheists today are trying to rid the world of Christianity, with its code of morals and ethics that define “right” and “wrong”. **They do not realize that the “human rights” and “civilization” they take for granted are the direct result of Christianity’s tremendous effect on all cultures and religions throughout the world.** Everywhere, today, “civilized” societies are measured by the norms that have developed through the tempering influence of the New Testament.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

Read the New Testament. Compare the teachings of Christ with the teachings of others who are counted as “holy men”. Compare Christianity with other religions. Compare its effect on human lives with the effect of other religions. We believe that you will discover that **everything that is right and good for humans is taught in the New Testament of the Bible, and that everything that is harmful is forbidden.** Two thousand years of history have proved that, if you become a Christian and follow those teachings exactly, it will bring nothing but good into your life. This evidence is our best guarantee that it is also our safe and reliable guide for eternity.

**“BUT THERE ARE MANY ‘KINDS’ OF ‘CHRISTIANS’.
HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT?”**

Those who were not reared in a “Christian” environment are rightly puzzled by the divisions among believers in Christ. They ask, “If there is only one God, why are there so many churches?” It’s a good question.

In Acts 20:30, Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, *“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things,*

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*to draw away the disciples after themselves.” In this single statement, Paul explained the problem that would plague the church of Christ as it grew and spread over the centuries and over the world. From among the elders (bishops) some would rise up to teach things contrary to the Scriptures, and they would divide the church. Further details are given in 1 Timothy 4:1-3: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, **forbidding to marry**, and commanding to **abstain from foods** which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”*

These words were prophetic, and history bears out the truth of what was foretold. Elders (bishops) of the early church began to teach many things contrary to Scripture. “Denominations” developed.

QUESTION: What is a denomination?

ANSWER: A denomination is a division which separates the original whole into parts. Because of differences in teachings, the original church which Jesus established became divided into separate groups. A “denomination” called the “**Gnostics**” developed even during the lifetime of the Apostles. They taught, among many other errors, that salvation could be gained only by special knowledge, held by a particular few, and apart from the writings of the Scriptures. **Docetists**, along with Gnostics and **Marcionites**, taught that all matter is evil; therefore, Jesus only *seemed* to have a physical body.

Other variant teachings caused other denominations to develop in the second and third centuries: **Manichaeism** was similar to Gnosticism but also incorporated elements of **Buddhism** and **Zorasterism**. Augustine became a convert to this denomination. Founders of **Montanism** in 156 AD believed that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them anew and that they were inspired to write and teach things that should supplant the accepted Scriptures. (See **Early Christian Doctrines**, J.N.D. Kelly.) Many other divisions are recorded in religious history, showing us that denominations are not a modern phenomenon. In the early centuries of the church, these groups developed because men left the Scriptures, teaching contradictory doctrines and drawing people after them, out of the true church which Jesus had established and for which He had died. The same practice is the explanation for denominations today.

QUESTION: When these groups developed, what happened to the original church? Did it die?

ANSWER: No. Jesus said He would build His church and **it would never be destroyed**. In Matthew 16:18, He said that even the gates of Hades (or death, itself) would not be able to prevail against His church. But many individual Christians and congregations *did* fall into error. In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus directed the apostle John to write letters to congregations in various cities and to warn them that if they followed false doctrines and teachers, He would remove “their candlestick”; that is, **they would cease to be a part of His world-wide church**. That was true then, and **it is true today**. But the Lord’s church, as a body, will exist in this world until Christ returns to take His people home to Heaven. In the meantime, let us be warned that **any individual or congregation can fall away from God by leaving the truth of the Scriptures**.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that **men from among themselves would lead the church into error**. History shows that this is exactly how it happened. With the passing of time, elders over individual congregations began to recognize “chief elders” among themselves, then bishops over areas, and one bishop over area-bishops, until by 606 AD the “head” bishop became the Pope of Rome, over what was called the Roman Catholic Church. By 1277, Pope Innocent III was claiming himself to be the “Vicar of Christ” (the representative or spokesman) on earth, and Nicolas III called himself the “Vicar of God” (from **Catholic Encyclopedia**, Vol. 4, page 403). In 1830, Pope Pius IX declared Popes to be **infallible**.

From early centuries, leaders in the Catholic church had **forbidden the marriage of bishops and priests**, just as Paul had foretold. The **eating of meats** on certain days was also forbidden. Other divisive and heretical doctrines were **the mediation of Mary** for humans as the “Mother of God”; Mary’s **immaculate conception**; the tainting of all souls with the sin of Adam and, therefore, the necessity of **baptism even for infants**; **purgatory**; **transubstantiation**; and the **authority of the Pope** and the church “**traditions**” **above and beyond the Scriptures**.

When the Scriptures cease to be the authority in religious matters, the floodgates for error have been opened.

In 1054, quarrels over the introduction of musical instruments in

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worship and the sprinkling (instead of immersion) of infants (not authorized in Scripture) and converts led to a major division in the Catholic church, with the new group being called the Greek Orthodox Church. Though in error on many points, the “Orthodox” church to this day practices immersion for baptism, as was commanded in the New Testament, and only a cappella music is used, as was also practiced in the early church.

The sale of indulgencies — in effect, **buying forgiveness for a sin before it was committed** — led Martin Luther to defy the Pope in 1517 with what came to be called Luther’s 95 Theses, which he nailed to the door of the Whittenburg church. His rebellion eventually resulted in a total break with the Catholic church. Contrary to Luther’s own wishes, the new denomination called itself after **Luther** instead of Christ. Many Catholic practices were brought over into the church, but Luther had been so opposed to the Catholic doctrines concerning “works” that he made a complete turn-around and taught that salvation is solely by faith. He even opposed the book of James being included in the canon of Scripture, because James wrote in 2:17, *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”*

Other divisive opinions and beliefs led John Calvin to break away and begin the **Presbyterian** church in 1535. John Smyth started the **Baptist** church in 1607. John Wesley gave birth to the **Methodist** church in 1729. In the United States, the **Mormon** church had its beginning in 1830. William Miller and Ellen White began the **Seventh Day Adventist** church in 1831. **Jehovah’s Witnesses** were started by Charles Russell in 1874. **Pentecostal Holiness** were organized in 1898. **Assembly of God** churches started in 1914, etc., etc.

Actually, thousands of individual denominational groups are in existence today, teaching doctrines differing from each other and differing from the Scripture, for **it is the differences that are the dividing walls**. Obviously, if all were teaching the same thing, all would be united!

“THE STATEMENTS ARE OFTEN MADE THAT ‘ONE CHURCH IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER’ AND ‘YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF A CHURCH TO BE SAVED.’ ARE THESE STATEMENTS RIGHT?”

ANSWER: They are right if you can find them in the New Testament. The sad fact is that nothing even akin to those ideas is there.

QUESTION: Then why would preachers say such things?

ANSWER: Go back to what Paul warned the young preacher, Timothy, in 1 Timothy 4:1,2: “*Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*”

We are involved in a spiritual war. God and Satan are fighting for the souls of men. Satan tried to block God’s plan to redeem humans from sin. He thought the death of Christ would be the death of that plan, but actually it became the means to save us. When Satan saw that he was defeated on that point, and that the **church** — the **kingdom**, the **family of God**, made up of those who were being washed in Jesus’ blood in true baptism (Acts 2:38-47) — had come into existence, he devised a new way to keep people from being saved. By **deception** and **contradictory doctrines**, which he developed and spread through leaders within the church itself, **he created confusion and division.**

Those who were deceived by Satan’s doctrines were marked by God as having fallen from His grace (Revelation 2 and 3; Galatians 5:4; James 2).

But Satan’s lies didn’t end with corrupting teachings and practices *within the church*. Through division and creation of “churches” that *look similar* to the Lord’s church, but that were actually created by humans and teach doctrines contradictory to the Scriptures, **Satan has confused the entire world.** It is difficult to sort out truth from error. Millions of good, well-intentioned people have been blinded to what the Scriptures teach about the church which was established by Christ. They will live and die in denominations, believing them to be sanctioned by God. But the sad facts are that **no denomination was started by Christ, He cannot and will not overlook the doctrines and creeds that Satan has inspired men to develop, and there is no spiritual umbrella that brings all of this division into the one mythical “spiritual Church of Christ” of which denominational leaders speak.** Division is division, and Scripture condemns it.

So Satan hides the true church with all of the imitations he has brought into existence. And he has gone a step further. He knows that humans were created to seek and serve their Creator. Most of us **will** follow some sort of religion. Satan doesn’t really care how religious we are, as long as he can keep us from finding *the truth*. His goal is to prevent us from **being born into God’s family.**

QUESTION: How does he do that?

ANSWER: By burying the true teaching about that birth under his lies. When Peter and the apostles were asked in Acts 2:38 what people must do to be saved, they answered, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* This is the **new birth** of John 3:3-5, which Jesus Himself said we **must** experience in order to enter His kingdom. So, **Scriptural baptism**, for the **forgiveness of our sins**, becomes **the door** into God’s family, the kingdom, the church. If people don’t go through that door, they are not saved.

Let’s make a comparison with your personal will. If you leave all of your possessions to your children, who will inherit? Just anyone who makes a claim? No. Only those born into your family are your children, and no one else can legally inherit your estate.

In the same way, the New Testament is Jesus’ will. It should be binding in every directive. But people have come along and said, “Oh, that’s not important.” or “You can do this... or this...” Even on such an important subject as being born into God’s family and having forgiveness of sins, what Jesus stipulated is disregarded. He plainly said that **a sinner must believe in Him and be baptized** — which is the water of the **new birth** (John 3:3-5) — **in order to be forgiven of sins** (Mark 16:16) and to **enter His kingdom**. But do you know what most denominational preachers say?

QUESTION: What?

ANSWER: That you don’t have to do anything but say “the sinner’s prayer” — just stop right where you are and ask Jesus to come into your heart and He will save you. But the amazing thing is that “the sinner’s prayer” is not even in the Scriptures! Men have made it up; men have decided that this is the way to be saved; men are standing right in the face of Jesus and saying that **they have authority to contradict what He has said** — and, so, people listen to those men. But when death comes, who is going to save the people who have depended on “the sinner’s prayer” instead of doing what Jesus commanded in His Will?

Almost every truth or doctrine in the New Testament has been taught wrongly by some religious group. But **Satan has focused most of all on the act of baptism**. Why? Because **it is the culminating act of obeying the Gospel**. It becomes the door into the house of God. If Satan

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can camouflage and *hide that door*, the masses will pass on by and will never find the way to become children of God.

So, that is why **baptism is denied** by almost all religious leaders, and why **“the sinner’s prayer” is substituted**. But the command of baptism is taught throughout the New Testament, and the sinner’s prayer is not there at all. That fact should help the honest seeker to know that “faith only” (James 2:14-24) falls into the category of Paul’s description of **“doctrines of demons”** and hypocritical lies.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that Jesus is coming back *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not **know God**, and on those who **do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Peter warned in 1 Peter 4:17 *“For the time has come for judgment to **begin at the house of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who **do not obey the gospel of God?**”*

NOW, BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH...

QUESTION: So, what *did* happen to the church Jesus promised to start?

ANSWER: If you read Acts 1 you will see that Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come. In Acts 2, the promise was fulfilled, and the Gospel was preached for the first time to thousands of people. At the end of the lesson, convinced that they were guilty of crucifying the Son of God, many of them asked, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*

Peter’s answer is the same answer we need for the same question today. When we are convinced that we are sinners and need forgiveness, we ask, “What must I do?”

*“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 2:38).

QUESTION: What happened then?

ANSWER: Three thousand of them did **turn away from their sins** and were **immersed in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of their sins**. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, their souls that were dead in sin were made alive again to God as **they were born into God’s family, the church**. In verse 47, we are told, *“the Lord added to the church daily*

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those who were being saved.” If we do the same thing today, we will be saved, washed in the blood of Christ, and added to the church of Christ, just like those people on that first day. We don’t have to be a part of any denomination. We can — and we **must** — by-pass all of these divisions created by the doctrines men have added to the Scripture. **We can be a part of that original church, the body of Christ, which is also described as His bride in Ephesians 5:23-33.**

QUESTION: What was the original church like? Was it very different from denominations today?

ANSWER: Some denominations are closer to the pattern of the New Testament church than others, but all have some differences. Remember, it is the differences that cause the division.

QUESTION: Are the differences so important?

ANSWER: If you made a will and then, after your death, thousands of people made thousands of changes, would those differences be important to you?

ANSWER: Yes! No one has the authority to change a will, once a person dies.

ANSWER: In the same way, through the inspired New Testament, Jesus has told us everything about how we are to live as individual Christians, and everything about how His church is to work, teach, and live.

In the four accounts of the life of Christ, He laid down many laws that were to govern His followers. The Sermon on the Mount set a new standard for personal behavior and interaction with one’s neighbors, as well as one’s enemies. Though much of what Jesus said has become a measuring guide for what we think of as “civilized behavior”, it was not the norm in the world when He was speaking the words. And it is not as much the norm today, even in so-called “Christian” nations, as we would expect. Humanism has eaten away at the belief that lying, cheating, immorality, abortion, and many other evils are actually wrong. And an increasing number of people who claim to believe in Jesus do little more than pay lip service to what He taught.

But sin *is* sin, and one who has been born into Christ’s family, and

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is wearing His name, crucifies Christ anew when he continues to practice a sinful life. The writer of Hebrews (10:26-31) warns Christians, *"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

So the individual Christian must live with integrity, sincerely trying to grow to be like his heavenly Father and his elder Brother in his attitudes, his faith, and in all he says and does.

No human can live a perfect life. God's grace and the cleansing blood of Christ will be necessary as long as we live, just as we are promised in 1 John 1:7-9: *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Galatians 5:19-24 contrasts the behavior of people of the world with the behavior of Christians: *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Christians are commanded to return good for evil, to seek what is best even for those who hate them, to live in the world as Christ lived before us. **All that is good is embodied in the life we are to live, and all that is**

harmful and bad is forbidden. Read through the Gospel accounts, and then study the letters to the churches, which comprise twenty-one of the remaining books of the New Testament. If absolutely every human on the face of the earth stopped doing all of the sinful things, and started developing the fruit of God's Spirit in their lives, wouldn't this world be almost like heaven on earth? That's what God wants of His people, individually.

QUESTION: But I know a lot of *good* denominational people, and a lot of other good people who are not in any church. They're living like God asked. Doesn't He accept that?

ANSWER: You know, there's an interesting contradiction here. In the denominational world, when the command of baptism is mentioned, often the immediate cry is that "baptism is a **work**, but we are saved **by grace** — **by the blood of Christ**; our *good* works have nothing to do with salvation."

But then if a person dies, not having been very religious or a member of a church, the declaration is made, "He was a *good* man. You know God wouldn't condemn such a good person to hell." So, the human conclusion is that he is saved by his own goodness — and the blood of Christ wasn't necessary after all in his case. But where is the Scripture?

The fact is that we *are* saved by God's grace *and* the blood of Christ, but let's not forget that Romans 6:3,4 explains that **the way we reach the blood is in the act of being buried into His death in the waters of baptism.** And there is the further fact that baptism actually is not *a work* but the movement of *obedient faith* which puts us **into the grace of God.** We *cannot* be saved by our own goodness, because none of us are "good enough" without Christ. Galatians 3:27 says that **the way we enter Christ is through baptism.**

QUESTION: Why do you call the church "the church of Christ"? Does the name really matter?

ANSWER: In Acts 4:12, speaking of the name of Jesus Christ, we are told, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is **no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***" Ephesians 3:14,15 says, "*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of **our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.***" Disciples were called **Christians** first in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The church itself was often called simply "**the church**" (Matthew 18:17), because there was only one, so no "distinctions" needed to be

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made. It was also called “**the Way**” (Acts 19:9,23), **the church of God** (“which He purchased with His blood”, so “God” is having reference to Christ) (Acts 20:28), **the church of the Firstborn** (Hebrews 12:23), **the bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:23-27; Revelation 21:2), **churches of Christ** (Romans 16:16), (having reference to *congregations* in numerous places, but the same *church*), and other designations. “Ekklesia”, the Greek word translated “church”, actually means “the body of believers that has been called out of the world”. This descriptive word is used more than 100 times in the New Testament.

QUESTION: As an organized group of people, how is the church of Christ different from denominations?

ANSWER: There are many ways. First, it does not wear a denominational name, and its members are called only Christians. Its head is Christ. There is no president of a board, no head bishop, no Pope. In the church’s organization, the highest office any human can hold is that of an elder (bishop, presbyter, pastor, and shepherd are other Biblical terms for the same office). 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 give the qualifications for elders. There must always be a plurality; there is no “head” elder, and they have no authority over sister congregations. Preachers or evangelists are not called “pastors” (an elder) or “Reverend” (God’s name only is “reverend”, Psalm 111:9). Men are to provide the public leadership in the church, according to 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. It was not a cultural practice, but God’s law, that women were not to be in authority over men.

In the church, there is no earthly headquarters. Each congregation is autonomous, led by its own elders and deacons.

The New Testament is the only creed of churches of Christ. We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that we cannot add to its words or subtract from them (Revelation 22:18,19).

In the New Testament, in public assemblies of the church, Christians worshiped God through **prayer** (Acts 2:42), **studying His word** (2 Timothy 2:2), remembering Christ’s death in a **weekly memorial** (Acts 20:7), **giving** of their money for the preaching of the Gospel and helping those in need (1 Corinthians 16:2); and they **sang praises** to God (Hebrews 2:12). Worship was intended to praise and glorify God. In this age, it has become an emotional experience in entertainment. People go to meetings because they “like” the show, in many cases. Entire bands have

been added to the choirs of years past. Yet, neither of these is authorized by God's word. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 say that we are to **sing** and to **make the melody in our hearts**, as we teach one another by the words we are singing. Though musical instruments have been in the world since Jubal first invented them in Genesis 4:21, they were not added to "Christian" worship until **the eleventh century AD!**

QUESTION: But it's a small thing. Does it really matter?

ANSWER: When Nadab and Abihu changed God's worship in Leviticus 10:1,2, it mattered enough to God that He sent down fire from heaven and killed them. **Who gave any human the authority to change God's Will, as He has given it to us in the New Testament?**

QUESTION: What is the work of the church?

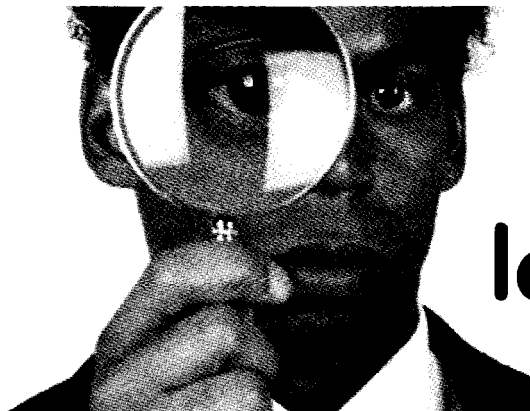
ANSWER: We must be involved in many things: In Matthew 25 Jesus painted a picture of His people helping the poor, the widows, orphans, ministering to the sick, the bereaved, the down-trodden. According to the inspired letters directed to the church, we are to defend the faith, and to teach and encourage each other, to be lights in an evil world, helping others to see God through our lives, as individuals and as a group.

But the foremost work of the church is to bring the saving message of Christ to the world, as He Himself commanded, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen. (Matthew 28:19,20).

QUESTION: There are many beliefs in the various religions regarding life after death. What does the New Testament teach about that?

ANSWER: *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men ... He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son'"* (Revelation 21:1-7).

The promise? Eternal life with God. *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ... [and we] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). †



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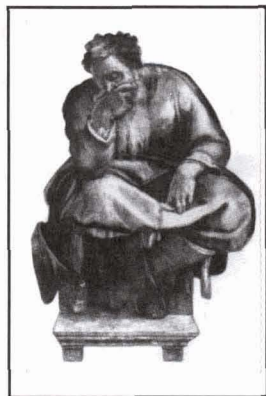
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search — 49 (from page 30)



James

1. For Italy, under the authority of a man named Julius of the Augustian Regiment.
2. He allowed Paul to go ashore to his friends — Christians — and to receive care.
3. Yes.
4. That the voyage would end in disaster and loss of cargo and of life if they continued.
5. They gave up all hope of survival.
6. That they should have listened to him and not incurred the disaster they were facing.
7. To take heart and that there would be no loss of life, but only the ship would be lost.
8. *"For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve...."*
9. *Caesar; God; all those who sail with you.*
10. The sailors sensed that they were near land and began to take soundings of the depth.
11. They tried to escape in the skiff while pretending to put out anchors from the prow.
12. That unless all of the men stayed on the ship, they would not be saved.
13. To eat food, so he took bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and began to eat.
14. Two hundred and seventy-six.
15. To kill them, to prevent them swimming away and escaping.
16. *Centurion; Paul; swim; land; "...and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land."*

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