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EDITORIAL



Matthew Twentyfour

Why do most people have difficulty in understanding Matthew 24? Mainly because they try to find things there which the Lord never intended to teach in this great chapter. People in general believe that in Matthew twentyfour Chapter Christ was telling the disciples about the signs of the end of the world and of His final coming in the day of judgment. But if this was true then why would the Lord say in the same chapter, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matt. 24:36). And then He went on to say that as the flood came in the days of Noah, suddenly, unannounced, so shall be His coming also at the end of the world. This is what we read, He said, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the Ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be . . . Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming . . . Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Matt. 24:37-39, 42, 44). Then, again, in the very next chapter, He spoke the parable of the wise and foolish

virgins to emphasize His sudden and unannounced coming, and concluded by saying, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matt. 25:13).

Now, if no person on earth, no, not even the angels who live with God in heaven know about the time of Christ's coming to judge the world, and since the Lord Himself has said that we are to be watchful and ready because we know neither the day nor the hour in which He would come, and that He would come at an hour in which we would not even be expecting Him to come. Then why would He contradict Himself by giving us signs of His coming in Matthew 24?

No, in Matthew 24 Christ was not speaking about the signs of His final coming when He would come to judge the whole world (Acts 17:31), but rather He was telling His disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple buildings there, which actually took place some forty years later in A.D. 70 exactly in the manner that the Lord had spoken.

At the beginning of this chapter we read, "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see *all these things*? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall be not thrown down." Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" Obviously, the disciples assumed that "these things" which the Lord was talking about would take place at the end of the world when the Lord would finally come to judge the whole world. Thus they asked the Lord, when shall these things be? And what shall be the signs when these things are about to come to pass? They wanted to know from the Lord, the time and the sign. In answering the disciples' question, in the following verses, the Lord told them of His two comings and about two ends of two different worlds. First, in verses 4-35 Christ discussed His coming in judgment upon Jerusalem. Secondly, in verses 36-51

He discussed His coming for final judgment to mark the end of the whole world. However, in both instances the Lord kept in mind the disciples' question about the time and the sign.

In discussing the end of Jerusalem the Lord first of all told them about the things which would come to pass, such as coming of false christs, rumors of wars, troublesome times, and terrible circumstances. But, He warned, ". . . all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Matt. 24:6). The end of Jerusalem, however, would come only after the gospel had been preached to the whole world. (Matt. 24:14). And this is precisely what had happened. Before 70 A.D. the Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans, "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8). And in his epistle to the Colossians at Col. 1:23 he plainly stated that the gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven.

After discussing many signs which could be misleading and would not indicate the end, and after stating that Jerusalem would not be destroyed until after the gospel had been preached to the whole world, Christ then discussed the real sign. He said, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy place (whoever reads let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those with nursing babies in those days. And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation . . ." (Matt. 24:15-21). The "abomination of desolation" means the presence of the heathen Roman Army which came to destroy Jerusalem. In the parallel account in Luke 21:20 we read, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near." That the Lord here was discussing a local, not a universal, event is evident from this reading. Because when the Lord finally comes to judge the whole world at the end there would be no point in one's fleeing to the mountains or making haste in trying to escape the final event. At Matt. 24:28 Christ declared that the Jewish nation was now a

dead carcass, and the vultures, therefore, the Roman Army under general Titus, would gather for its complete destruction.

Matthew 24:29,30 speaks of "the tribulation of those days" immediately preceding the actual destruction of Jerusalem. It is commonly believed that here the Lord was describing His final coming and the end of the world. But this is not true. The Lord was still speaking about the time and the sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. In these verses Christ employs apocalyptic or figurative terminology with which the disciples, being Jew, would be familiar. The same terminology was used in the Old Testament when the prophets had discussed the overthrow of Babylon, Idumea, and Egypt. For instance, with regard to the destruction of Babylon, the record says, "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause it light to shine Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isaiah 13). About the overthrow of Idumea Isaiah had said, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven; indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of my curse for judgment." (Isaiah 34:4, 5). The same language is employed in Ezekiel 32:7, 8 about the downfall of Egypt. What is written in Matthew 24:29,30 simply means that immediately after the tribulation of those days Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that the very destruction of Jerusalem would be the sign or the evidence of the Lord's presence in judgment. The destruction itself would be the conclusive evidence that the Lord was involved in it and that He came to overthrow a disobedient and unrepentant people. The statement ". . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" does not refer to the Lord's final coming. Rather, as already discussed, it refers to the Lord's coming in powerful judgment over Jerusalem.

Again, the same language is used in Isaiah 19:1 where the Lord said He would come riding on a swift cloud in Egypt to overthrow her.

What Do You See?

J.C. Choate

Concerning Jesus, we read, "And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he puts his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." (Mark 8:33-36).

Jesus had the power to do miracles. In the case of this blind man, he gave him his sight. At first, however, when he was asked what he saw, he said he saw men walking as trees. Evidently they were not clear, but after Jesus put his hands on his eyes again, he saw every man clearly.

Although most people have good eyesight, still the vast majority of them see poorly. Like the man that was with Jesus, they see men as trees, as material objects, as human beings, or as animals. They fail to see the real people who are there, that they have been created in the image of God, that they have souls, and that they will spend eternity somewhere.

Millions of people have eye problems when it comes to the church. They see the church as a material building, as a denomination, as being man-made, and as being unimportant.

Many of these same people see the Pope as head of the church instead of Christ, that there is nothing in a name, and that

it doesn't matter how you worship just so long as you are honest and sincere.

Others see no importance in baptism, but that if one will only live a good moral life that he will be saved. There are those who do not see Christ as a resurrected Lord, or as being the Son of God. Rather, they see Christ as being but a mere man.

There are those that see only difficulties and hardships in living the Christian life. They don't see how it could be possible for Christ to return or how the righteous could go to heaven for all eternity and how the wicked could be cast into everlasting punishment.

On another occasion Christ said, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Matthew 13: 13-17).

Physical sight is wonderful but spiritual sight is even more important. The scriptures speak of this on many occasions. We have heard people say, "I just can't see that." Others have said, "That is so easy to see." In both cases they are talking about their ability to understand or not to understand the things that they are being taught.

Why is it that so many cannot see the truth? It is because they are ignorant of God's word, that they have been deceived,

or that they don't want to understand. In each case, this is sad. God has revealed his will and made it clear and simple. Surely it can be understood if one wants to understand it.

On the other hand, when one reads and studies God's word, puts prejudice out of his mind, and desires to know God's will and to obey it then the word of the Lord is so simple and easy to understand and to comply with.

My friend, you cannot see with eyes closed. Neither can you see if you don't want to see. What do you see? What do others see in you? What does Jesus see in you?

How God Has Spoken Unto Man

Dillard Thurman

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden! They enjoyed perfect harmony and fellowship with God, and could talk with Him as with a friend! But sin soon changed all that. For man fell from God's plane of righteousness, and as a sinner, he was separated from his Creator. (Isa. 59:1-2). Man's departure was by four well-defined steps. [1] Man heard the word of Satan; [2] He believed the word of the devil; [3] He turned from God; and [4] He yielded in obedience to the devil! These four steps separated him from God, and man became the servant of the devil: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). Before he had fallen from God's grace, man had right to the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). But because of sin, man was separated from God and also banished from Eden, lest he should eat of the tree of life and live forever in a sinful state (Gen. 3:22-24).

This original sin brought the sentence of death into the world, and opened the flood-gates for all iniquities; and all men have been under condemnation. "As it is written, There is none

righteous, no, not one." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10, 23). Yet the goodness and forbearance of God set forth a means whereby man can be justified before Him again! Man can return by retracing the steps back to God. [1] Man must hear the word of God (Rom. 10:14, 17); [2] must believe that message (Heb. 11:6); [3] must turn from Satan back to God (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 3:19); and [4] must render obedience unto the Lord (Heb. 5:8-9)! In this way man can serve God again: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17).

The infidel thinks God has spoken only through NATURE, and he rejects the Bible entirely. There are those who think God speaks directly to folk today as He did in the Garden of Eden. But there are those who believe God speaks to man by His revealed will, given in sacred writings by inspired men (which is our Bible). It will never become out-of-date or obsolete! For this cause Peter declared: "But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1:25). And the Lord Himself stated: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." (Mk. 13:31). After the mountains have crumbled and the earth melted with fervent heat, the Word of God shall confront us in judgment: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (Jno. 12:48). Many people try to evade the word of God today: but they will finally face that word at the judgment.

God Spake by His Prophets!

There was a time when God spake to men through His prophets. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21). Those prophets did not choose the time, place, audience or message! David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." (2 Sam. 23:2). It

was not man's choice, but was by God's direction and guidance! was not a message from man, but a revelation of God! The prophet had no choice of when, where, or what he should speak! So it is stated: "God, who as sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." (Heb. 1:1). God straitly warned: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell it as a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." (Jer. 23:28). God controlled the prophet. When God prompted, the prophet spake: but only that which God inspired!

Prophets Prophesied of Jesus Christ!

To Moses it was said: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name; I will require it of him." (Deut. 18:18-19). Jesus Christ showed that He fulfilled these words: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (Jno. 12:49). Jesus knew He fulfilled prophecy when He read in the synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Lk. 4:18-19). Handing the scroll back to the attendant, He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (v. 21). To unbelieving Jews, Jesus said, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me." (Jno. 5:46). Surely Jesus knew He was the object of Old Testament prophecy!

Jesus Christ Was God's Great Prophet

Many other prophets came before and after, but Jesus Christ stood supremely alone as God's anointed! Nicodemus was moved to affirm; "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (Jno. 3:2). To accomplish this great work, the Holy Spirit attended Him: "For he whom God hath sent

speareth the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." (Jno. 3:34). This led men to exclaim, "Never man spake like this man." (Jno. 7:46). The reason was simple: "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Mt. 7:29). And to remove any vestige of doubt as to that authority, God declared on the mount of Transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Mt. 17:5). This clarifies it: God "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. 1:2).

Jesus Commissioned the Apostles!

At the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus gathered the apostles to Him, and charged them to carry on the work He had begun. He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:15-16). The Lord promised to attend them as they accomplished this work, and He did so by the Spirit which He had promised them; "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mk. 16:20). This assurance was given even as He departed from them: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit Promised the Apostles

While informing the apostles that He would leave, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be with them. Study closely and carefully these passages: Jno. 14:16-17, 26-27; 15:26-27; 16:7-13. Study these passages and itemize the things He taught. (1). The Spirit would be sent by the Father in answer to Christ's prayer. (2). He would be given to the apostles, and the world could not receive Him. (3) The Spirit then dwelt WITH the apostles, and would be IN them. (4). The Spirit would teach the apostles all things, and bring to their remembrance all Jesus had said. (5). He would testify of Christ so the apostles could bear accurate wit-

ness. (6). He would guide the apostles into all truth. (7). He would show them things to come. This measure of the Spirit was promised to the apostles only, and was never meant for the whole world. As ambassadors of Christ, they were qualified by Spirit to serve the kingdom of God on earth in a very unique way!

God's Revelation Through the Word

Since the sin of Adam, no man has spoken to the Lord face to face. Rather, God has revealed His will, and confirmed His word, by His Spirit. Paul, an apostle, stated: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery . . . But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:7-10). He also said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph. 3:4-5). Peter referred to these revealed things, "which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. 1:12). The signs and wonders performed by inspired men have been preserved for all ages to insure faith in Christ: "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." (Jno. 20:30-31). That saving gospel "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us" with miraculous signs and wonders (Heb. 2:3). Our salvation now rests in God's revealed will, and our obedience to it! Thus men are urged: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Jas. 1:21). "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:1-3). God has revealed His will that man may know it, and render obedience unto Him!

His Revelation Produces Saving Faith!

Paul states: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26-27). But how does one obtain this saving faith? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). But that faith is possible, as Peter affirms: "We have a more sure word of prophecy." (2 Pet. 1:19). Earlier Peter had said that God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3). We can have confidence in this revelation: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We need nothing more to assure our salvation!

A soul-searching question is asked in 1 Pet. 4:17—"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" This rhetorical question is answered in 2 Thes. 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." God sent His only begotten Son that we might believe on Him and obey! "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8-9). Who will be your Saviour if you refuse His word? We plead with you to turn in obedience to the Lord and be saved!

"The Tongue-Speaking" Tangle

G.N. Chauhan

It is claimed in ignorance that God continues to endow certain

religious people even today with "extra-terrestrial" gifts: that is, to speak in unknown tongues, to divinely heal, to cast out evil spirits and to prophesy as did the Apostles and certain others in the first century.

Of course, this is mere deception and a hoax perpetrated on ignorant people who fall prey to the subtle ruse of a religious group who are noted for their sprite incantation, emotionalism and spiritual high in their manner of worship.

Anyone who has made an intelligent search of the Scriptures keeping in mind the original historic Christianity founded by our Lord Christ Jesus on the day of Pentecost A.D. 33, in all its pristine purity and all-sufficiency, one comes to see a very much garbled version of Christianity prevalent in the world today at the hands of denominationalism. And this is no Christianity at all. Rather it is counterfeit.

No wonder the Holy Spirit beforehand saw to warn the seekers after truth that apostasy would come down with a heavy hand to prevaricate the Word of God, which stood complete in all respects before the turn of the first century, the faith once delivered, the gospel of our salvation, in the permanency of Holy Writ (Jude 3; Eph. 1:13; John 20:30, 31). Note carefully these Scriptures. (1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:1, 6, 7; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

It is basic then that a thorough study of the Bible is made to dispel erroneous teachings and doctrines of men that have infiltrated into the purity of God's Word despite God's continuous warnings (Deut. 4:2; Pr. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

Now the question that arises is, does the Bible give conclusive evidence that tongue-speaking, together with other miraculous gifts, have long ceased and anyone who lays claim to such gifts is under pure deception? Does the Bible say so? Or does ignorance speak at the hands of some people!

Observe first the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:28-30). The gift of speaking in tongues here is mentioned last. In Rom. 12:6-8 and

Eph. 4:11, 12, the gift of speaking in tongues is not even mentioned. In 1 Cor. 14:6-8 Paul shows that prophecy is superior to tongue-speaking. In other words, it is to be preferred. In verses 20-25 of the same chapter, Paul shows that an undue exaltation of tongues is a sign of spiritual immaturity. In verse 31, Paul says there is a more excellent way than these spiritual gifts, and in 1 Cor. 13:1, 2 he tells them that that way is LOVE.

For those who claim today that speaking in tongues is a sign of having received the Holy Spirit baptism is a deception based on ignorance due to lack of proper study of God's Word. If this was true about speaking in tongues, then we have a physical sign proving a spiritual evidence in our lives. But this is only true of spiritual evidences being present when a spiritual change has taken place. If we have received the Holy Spirit, we will bear His fruits as stated in (Gal. 5:22, 23). Further, many today seem to have a greater concern for tongue-speaking and miraculous gifts than for the Holy Spirit Himself.

And in any case, the Apostles were the ones who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and Cornelius and household (Gentiles). Others did only by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles. When Acts chapters one and two are very carefully read, this point is proved beyond any shred of doubt. Since there are no Apostles living today or those of the first century who could do signs and wonders, like Stephen and others, there is no tongue-speaking today. In fact, all these gifts have been withdrawn or have ceased (1 Cor. 13:9, 10). The New Testament stands complete as the perfect law of liberty to govern the lives of all those who have become Christians in obedience to the gospel of Christ (Jas. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The Scriptures, or New Testament lacks nothing, it is replete in every sense of the term and is available to all who will read, trust, believe and obey.

"The message that you may give,
The words that come from you,
Most truly honour Jesus,
When LOVE is given too."

Locked in these epistles is LOVE. Love is the only language everybody understands. See Eph. 5:2. Notice Eph. 4:7-14 carefully. These verses relate the following facts: 1. They tell WHEN spiritual gifts were given (v. 8). 2. TO WHOM these gifts were given (v. 11). 3. WHY these gifts were given (v. 12). 4. HOW LONG THEY WERE TO LAST (v. 13). Notice also the word "TILL" here. TILL the unity of faith is achieved. TILL the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God is achieved. TILL we reach a perfect or mature man. Does it not then seem obvious that miraculous gifts were to last only until the church complete revelation of God's will and until it matured spiritually? Surely friends, this is the truth.

In a law suit there are witnesses needed to establish the facts in a case. After these facts are recorded, there is no longer need for witnesses. Likewise the Christian faith is. It had its witnesses—preaching confirmed by miracles (Mk. 16:20) and the facts of Christianity have already been placed in written testimony—the New Testament. Apply now (2 Cor. 5:7) and it does apply, which says, "For we walk by faith and not by sight."

The so-called tongue-speaking by Some religious people today is not by any standard language speaking (which it should be if it was the case), but gibberish nonsense attendant with agitated bodies and limbs far too unpleasant to behold and vociferousness beyond the pale of decency and propriety. It is tongue-tangling, not tongue-speaking. They overlook Mt. 6:7; Eccl. 5:2; 1 Ki. 18:26.

As to them having power to expel evil spirits, they would do well to have a look at Zech. 13:1, 2.

Salvation Only in the True Church

Mark Hooper

The church in the Bible is often very different from the so-called "churches" we see today in our cities or villages. Most people today

do not really understand the meaning of the Biblical church and its characteristics. We have accepted modern and traditional organizations as representing the church, when in reality they do not resemble the church of the Bible at all.

The true church is a collection of people "called out" from sin, which is the definition of the Greek word for church. The Greek word is "ekklesia." It is very similar to the Hindi word for church, "kalesia". Paul explains that there is only one church to which we are "called" from sin (Eph. 4:4). The call to come out of a sinful life comes from God (2 Pet. 3:9), and from Jesus who through the cross calls all men to Him (John 12:32).

The church consists of those who have been forgiven or saved from their sins. In the first century as well as today, God adds all those who are forgiven and saved to the church (Acts 2:47). Therefore, one cannot join the church; God adds one to the church when he obeys fully God's plan of salvation. Jesus explained this by stating those who will be part of the kingdom of heaven must obey the Father's will. Just calling Jesus "Lord" is not enough (Matt. 7:21).

Many people in India today accept Jesus as a good man, a prophet, or even an avatar of God. Yet, whatever religious background one comes from it is not enough just to accept Jesus. We *must* obey God's will in order to be saved and added to the true body of believers that will be united with God in eternity, which is the church that belongs to Christ on the earth. So just calling Jesus Lord is not enough. We must obey exactly what he taught and be a member of the one church he built. (Matt. 16:18).

In the Bible, the church is never described as Catholic or Protestant, denominational or ecumenical, a political or social organization or club. It should not be organized on man-made or traditional patterns, but on the Divine pattern given in the New Testament. The Christians in the church of the Bible were one, unified family of God. They obeyed, taught and lived the same doctrines of Christ and his apostles that we have in the Bible without deviating in any way. They were all united under

Christ the King. Should not we be like that today? Should not we be members of the true church of the Bible, the church belonging only to Christ? Should not we be just Christians only?

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE TRUE CHURCH?

Since we have learned through Bible study that there is only one true church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4), we must examine our affiliation with certain groups who claim to be the church. We must study the teachings concerning the church of the Bible and compare them to the churches that claim to follow the Bible and determine why there are so many differences.

If we are members of the true church we will do all things in biblical ways and will not change or add to what the Bible commands. This is in reference to all aspects of the church like worship, organization, name, and especially God's plan of salvation. The church is made up of the people who are saved from their sins by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5). We must obey God's plan for obtaining the blood of Christ in order to be saved. We cannot join the true church, but God will add us to its membership when we obey His plan of Salvation (Acts 2:47). If you thought your sins were forgiven after following man-made teachings or convenient plans that leave out one or two of the four steps outlined in the book of Acts of the Apostles, then you are not a member of the true church, and your sins have not been forgiven.

Everyone in the book of Acts who became true Christian first had to believe that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Second, they had to repent of their sins. This not only means being sorry for sin, but also changing from a life of sin to a life of following God and His way of life for us. Third, as the Ethiopian did in Acts 8:37, we are to confess Christ before men. This is a simple affirmation of one's belief in Jesus as the Lord of our life in the presence of witnesses (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9). Fourth, one must be immersed in water, which is the biblical meaning of baptism. Paul explains it as a burial (Rom. 6:3-4) and it is the way one is spiritually united with the cleaning blood

of Christ. The physical act of baptism is necessary. Peter says that baptism saves us (I Peter 3:21), not the water, but as it unites us with Christ and his death. This is God's plan and we cannot change it or explain it away as being not so important or not required. Saul, who became Paul, accepted Jesus on the road to Damascus, but his sins were not forgiven until he completely obeyed God in all the steps to salvation (Acts 22:6-16). So let us examine baptism and the blood of Christ in more detail.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The Bible is very clear about what actually saves us from sin; the blood of Christ which was shed on the cross of Calvary (Rom. 5:9; I John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). As Jesus was separated from God on the cross (Matt. 27: 46), he paid the price for our sins (Rom. 6:23), so we would not have to be separated from God in Hell. His blood that was shed then represents His death and the sacrifice He made on our behalf. But forgiveness does not come to every one automatically. We must obey and thus accept this sacrifice—**THE WAY GOD COMMANDED US TO ACCEPT IT**, not the way we want to, or by the teachings or tradition of men.

This leads us to the question: How do I receive the forgiving blood of Jesus Christ in my life? Again, the Bible answers this question simply and clearly in Romans 6: 1-5. First, we must separate our-selves from a life of sin. Verse 2 says, we must die to sin. That is what repentance is: changing our ways from sin to obeying God. Second, verse 3 says we are baptized into Christ and into his death. It was at his death that His blood was shed, so we see that in baptism, we contact the saving power his blood. Third, verse 4 says that through baptism we are buried with Christ into His death therefore, baptism is and must be a burial symbolized in water. The word baptizo, the original Greek word, meant **ONLY** immersion or dunking under. Therefore, just as Jesus was buried, we are united with Him in a burial in water. Verse 4 also says, that like Jesus rose from the dead we rise from baptism to begin a new life. So baptism completely unites us with His blood by uniting us with His death, burial, and resurrection.

What Paul taught in Romans chapter 6 is the same thing taught in other Bible verses. Peter says in Acts 2:38 that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. Paul was told in Acts 22:16 to be baptized in order to wash his sins away. Peter said again in I Pet. 3:21 that baptism saves us. Is it the water? No, the blood of Christ saves us through the symbolic union which occurs ONLY at baptism. No where in the Bible it is indicated that forgiveness by the blood of Christ comes with prayer or belief only. Obedience to God's plan is necessary.

Therefore, in order to have our sins forgiven we must follow only God's plan. There are groups of people just following the Bible and being members of the one true church in many cities and villages in India. I live in Bombay. Visit us at the church of Christ—Bombay on Sundays at 11:00 AM at the Methodist Centre chapel, Y.M.C.A. Road (behind Maratha Mandir Cinema), Bombay Central. (We are not associated with the Methodist denomination.) or for a personal visit or discussion contact us at the church of Christ, Post Box 26773, Sion, Bombay 400 022. You are always welcome in worship services of church of Christ. Join us in restoring the true church Jesus built by following only God's pattern for His people.

Genuine Christianity For Today!

Johnny Ramsey

If there is anything we ought to stress in our preaching that we have not emphasized in days past and gone, it would be the necessity of pure motivation for all we do in the name of Christ. Col. 3 enjoins the name of the Lord in all that we do, and I Pet. 1:22 tells us that never was hypocrisy found in the Lord Jesus Christ. In one of the sternest rebukes found in the Old Testament, Ezek. 33:31, a great prophet rebuked the people of Israel for falsely mouthing their affections for Jehovah when their hearts were on a far journey! We are all familiar with the selfish language of the elder brother in Luke 15, that exposed his impure motives. Truly, he was externally and geographically where he

should have been, but spiritually he was a million miles removed from godliness. We, today, must remember that genuine Christianity involves more than warming the benches in church buildings, and going through the motions of worship. Jeremiah warned that temple worship could cause people to make their sanctuary their cemetery! The fearless prophet Amos even reminded his fellows that what they called worship God called noise! (Amos 5:23). Jesus Christ told pompous religionists of the first century that they actually worshipped in vain, because the veneer of their devotions could not compensate for their lack of sincere commitment to the Father. They were the Great Pretenders (Mk. 7:7-13).

Even hospitality is to be "without grudging." (1 Pet. 4:9). We are not to lie to one another because the Heart-Searcher detects the slightest deviation from truth (Col. 3:9; Acts 1:24). Unless we are absolutely devoted—inside and out—the Day of Judgment will be a calamity as described in Amos 5, where a man flees from a bear, and a lion meets him! Then he runs into a house, leans against the wall, and a snake bites him! The all-seeing eye of the Creator is in every place (Prov. 15:3). Yes, He even knows when we begin to lose our first love (Rev. 2:4), and we start to drift away from the moorings of the gospel (Heb. 2:1). It is a time of tragedy when we forget that even the meditation of our hearts are scrutinized by heaven (Psa. 19:14). May we never forget that Hagar was correct when she exclaimed: "Thou, O God, sees me." (Gen. 16:13). Since there is not a word in our tongue the Master does not know (Psa. 139:5-6), and no place exists where we can hide from "Him with whom we have to do," the most idiotic thing in all the world just has to be politics in the church! Yet, we do see folk, from time to time, who claim to be Christians trying to manipulate others as they strive for places of importance in the kingdom. However, such is totally futile for there is only one place of preeminence in the church, and Christ has it! (Col. 1:18). In fact, true greatness in the spiritual realm is from service and humility (Lk. 14:11).

Many years ago there was a famous picture show wherein a man was required to tell the absolute truth all day long. He got

into a lot of trouble, because the world is geared to flattery. Incidentally, such is condemned in 1 Thes. 2:5! When one thinks of the chicanery and trickery in the field of espionage, and the backstabbing in international intrigue, he becomes exceedingly thankful for the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). It was "the unfeigned faith" of Timothy and his kin that caused Paul such rejoicing (2 Tim. 1:5). We need more of such honest and pure motives today! Actually we are taught to "think on matters that are honest, true, pure, lovely and of good report" (Phil. 4:8). We definitely are what we think! Now, right there is our basic problem! The world is being fed a steady diet of filth, garbage and hellishness VIA every form of communication media!

Our penal institutions are overflowing as crime dockets are endless. Honest leaders—in business, religion, education and politics—are indeed a rare breed! This filters on into the church. Worship in spirit and in truth (Jno. 4:24) eludes many folk. It must have been a problem in New Testament times also, for Col. 3 informs that some served with a desire to please men rather than God. So important was inward purity to inspired penmen, that we read the word purloin in Tit. 2, which means that servants who would give their masters one hundred per cent effort actually robbed them! In Tit. 1, Paul condemns those who profess godliness but in works deny the Lord. Far too many members whom we label faithful still gossip, covet, worry, cheat, and generally behave in ways unbecoming of Christians. Why? It must be because we have not stressed in our preaching and teaching the beauty of holiness (1 Pet. 1:16). It is truly a pity when one meets people who centre their religion around a building, a pulpit and a preacher, instead of deepening in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Most of us are familiar with the derivation and background of the word sincere. It literally means without wax. That strange twist refers to dishonest merchants who displayed beautiful vases with cracks covered over with many layers of wax so the defects could not be detected by the average customer. When the brilliant sunlight beamed down on the vase, one could see through the wax and realize that he had been cheated. In Psa. 14:2 we learn that "God looks down from heaven on the children of men." What

does He see in us? One thing for sure: We cannot hide even in darkness and we cannot run far enough away to escape Him.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness hideth me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” (Psalm. 139:7-12).

Are we really honest with God? Some folk are honest neighbours, citizens and customers, but they are dishonest in spiritual pursuits that endure forever. Such folk argue with the Lord over baptism, the Lord’s Supper, attendance and giving. They cannot plead ignorance for their Bibles contain Mk. 16:16; Acts 20:7; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; and Heb. 10:25. It is not a matter of knowledge; it is a matter of honesty! It is rather significant that the very first recorded sin in the first century church had to do with poor motives. The account in Acts 5 deals with a man and his wife who lied about their contribution. They have many kinfolk today! Jesus took note of this problem in Mt. 6:21—“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Jeremiah challenges us in Lam. 3:40-41, when he tells us to search and try our ways as we lift up our hearts unto God in heaven. When the Psalmist asked Jehovah to lead us in the way everlasting, such request was based upon our thoughts and our ways as seen by the Maker of us all. That poses a real problem for those who think external pretensions will suffice. (Psalm. 139:23-24).

In Rom. 12, the peerless apostle tells us, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to be sure to “provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Our blessed Lord made it abundantly clear in Revelation that He “knows our works.” It is stressed: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. 4:12). In Ezekiel’s, day, bondage became a 70-year

reality because sinful men unwisely said: "God does not see us." But Joseph alone in Egypt, unseen by men, nevertheless promised: "I cannot do this great evil and sin against God". Daniel "purposed in his heart not to defile himself", and thus was mightily used by the Almighty for spiritual power. Barnabas also pungently reminds us to cleave to the Lord with "purpose of heart" (Acts 11:23).

Preachers who are not honorable in paying debts, elders who endorse a sorry preacher in order to get rid of him, and personal work experts who "duck people" instead of converting them, all ought to listen to these passages of Scripture. Members who act so sanctimonious while actually secretly living like the carnal folk around them truly fool no one but themselves! The clarion call and cogent cry of the Bible is: "Keep thyself pure and depart from iniquity." (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:19). We are not told to be popular unto glory, but to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). We may impress people with the baubles and trinkets of sham and pretense, but God sees through such shallow, mundane panoply. The meek and quiet spirit of a godly woman echoes loudly in heaven, while the wild language of the society charmers finds disdain in the halls of glory. Quiet, devoted preachers of the Word will be heroes in heaven long after the bombastic pulpiteers, who were merely show-men, have faded into oblivion. **Honest Motives Purely! What a challenge!**

Are we honest with our Maker? or do we make lies our refuge (Isa. 28:15)? Do we obey from the heart (Rom. 6:17), or like Jonah, do we run from the will of God? Do we search for excuses, or eagerly obey (Lk. 14:18; Jas. 1:21)? Do we say, "Lord, Lord" while refusing to meekly serve (Lk. 6:46; Jas. 1:27)? Jesus tells us that the Pharisees talked a good game, but did not perform the doing of it (Mt. 23:3). To claim to be religious will not get the job done (Jas. 1:26). Truly, we must "seek the Lord with our whole heart" (Psa. 119:2). As we strive to seek those things which are above (Col. 3), no passage becomes more appropriate than the classic touch of Phil 2:1-5, climaxed with: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

We must be honest with ourselves because, after all, we do have to live with the person we see in the mirror every day! Being honest with others we do have demands that we take the gospel to them in order to show genuine love for their eternal spirits. As we first give ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), our motives will be pure, and we will restore our brother (Gal. 6:2) to fulfill the law of the Lord which is the law of love and liberty (Jas. 1:25). Then we will be ready to sing that favorite: "Is thy heart right with God?"

Transformed by Renewing the Mind

Clem Thurman

The honest person, after real self-evaluation, is never satisfied. There are so many things we should do and are not, so many things we should not do and are, so many things we are doing but should do better. From early childhood, we look for a chance to "start over," to have a new beginning. The gospel fills our great need for that very reason, for the principle thrust of the gospel is that we can start over: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). If we are "in Christ" (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27), having been "born again" (Jno. 3:5), a new life is begun. That new life then requires that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ. (2 Cor. 5:15).

The new life, the Christian life, calls us "out of the world" (Jno. 15:19) into a life of dedication to Christ in righteous living. He said, "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). And the Lord set the pattern for us. In Gethsemane, just hours before He went to the cross, He prayed, "Father, not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42). That was the way He prayed, because that was the way He lived. So must we. The apostle exhorts, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17). But what enables us to live that new life, what gives us the power to turn from sin and live righteously in Christ?

Some claim that there must be some direct operation of the Holy Spirit on our hearts to change our affections—that without it, we can never leave sin. Others teach that when we pray to the Lord, he will save us and give us all of the strength we need—that there is nothing for us to do but to trust in Him. But such teaching is an obvious “cop-out” on our own responsibility, for it would make the Lord responsible for our being saved or lost, apart from our own actions. It is obvious that we will each “give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12) and be judged “according to our works” (Rev. 20:12). If we are to be changed, there is something for us to do to effect the process. The apostle Paul touched on the key to how we are changed when he wrote, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is a reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12: 1-2).

Renew the Mind by the Study of God’s Word

Some refuse to accept it, but it is still true: ignorance not only leads to sin, ignorance is sin! Jesus told the Sadducees of His day, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29). The Jews crucified Jesus because of their ignorance of God’s teaching and God’s will (Acts 3:19). They later rejected the will of God and substituted their own righteousness for His because of ignorance (Lk. 7:30) Saul (who was later the apostle Paul), persecuted Christ and the church because of ignorance (Acts 26:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:13-15). God does not excuse ignorance (Acts 17:30-31), for He expects us to know His will.

The only way we can come to Christ is by the process of learning, as Jesus said, “They shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (Jno. 6:45). We cannot expect emotion to be a substitute for reason, nor can we expect God to do our learning for us. We must learn. And it is through knowledge that “God grants unto us all things that pertain to life and to godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). That is why our study of the word of God is so

important (2 Tim. 2:15). There are no short-cuts. If we would "renew the mind" (Rom. 12:2) we must study. Paul wrote, "All Scripture is inspired of God, is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Transformation cannot occur unless we "renew the mind," and renewing the mind comes only by diligence in our study. (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Power of the Word of God in Our Lives

If we are saved, we are "saved by faith" (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1). But that faith results from our learning the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The apostle Paul wrote, "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel" (2 Thes. 2:13-14), If we believe because we have heard and accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no other way. That the word of God produces faith is stated by Paul this way in Rom. 1:16-17, "I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith."

Because the word of God produces faith, it also brings salvation (Rom. 1:16). After Peter had preached the gospel to the household of Cornelius, he explained to the Jewish disciples that an angel had told Cornelius to send for him: "Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved" (Acts 11:14). Many find it easy to disparage the Bible, ridiculing the idea that the written word is vital to our salvation. But the truth is that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), and none can be saved without it. Neither can anyone remain saved without that word: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth . . . Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:18-21). Peter wrote in a similar vein, "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth . . . And this is the word of the gospel which was preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:23,25). If we are going to be transformed, or spiritually renewed, it must be by "renewing the

mind" (Rom. 12:2). And we can only renew the mind when we apply ourselves to God's word, to learn it and to do it (Jas. 1:22-25).

Transformed into the Image of Christ

Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jno. 3:5). The apostle Paul wrote of this later: "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Being born again, we begin a new life "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). Thus, we are "buried with him in baptism" and "raised with him" (Col. 2:12). The apostle then writes, "If ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is . . . For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1, 3).

A number of things result from this "renewing of the mind" by the word of God. The Lord's promise to deliver us from temptation (1 Cor. 10:12-13) becomes meaningful as we read, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11). Instead of relying on the unseen, unknown, inward mystical influence, we go to the word of God to find what is right and to find the courage to do it. It is through that word that we are "built up" (Acts 20:32), as Paul wrote: "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught" (Col. 2:6-7). While people are looking for some kind of "spiritual experience" to make them feel good, Paul declares of the written word of God that it "also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:13). It is by that word that we learn how Christ lived, and so "follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). It was because of his loyalty to Christ and His word that Paul could write, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Such change apart from the word of Christ is just impossible.

God, through Paul's writing, tells us that we are to be "transformed" (Rom. 2:12). The word for "transformed" is the Greek, "metamorphousthe," from which we get the English word, "metamorphosis." A good example of the use of this word is found in biology: an egg is laid, hatches and becomes a larvae which becomes a chrysalis and then a butterfly. The process of change from one form of life to another is metamorphosis. This is the word Paul uses for the Christian. To live for Christ does not demand just a small change, it requires a completely different "life form" or form of life. To show how this is accomplished by "renewing the mind." Paul writes of our looking into the word of God: "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). The same thought is found in Col. 3:10 when we are told, "Put on the new man which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him."

If we would be "transformed," we must "renew the mind" by applying ourselves to learning and living by the word of God. When we do that we will be "transformed into the image of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18), "renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created us" (Col. 3:10). There is no shortcut. We should "search the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11) so that we can live for Christ. Then we can look forward to living with Christ.

May We Ever

May we ever fight the good fight,
May we ever stand in the power of his might.
May we ever put our enemy Satan to flight,
May we ever keep Christ the Lord in our sight.
May we ever the gospel of Christ both preach
and teach,
May we ever remember there is still another soul
to reach.
May we ever keep our hope of that heavenly goal,
May we ever long for that home of the soul.