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Is Jesus Going To Come Soon?

Suppose you received a letter from a friend who said, he would be coming soon to you. Now, when would you expect him? Certainly, you would expect him early or in a short time, and not a year or two later. Because soon means early or immediately. There are a number of denominational preachers who have been for years, saying and writing that Jesus is going to come soon. Some have been found writing, on public walls in cities, the slogan: "Jesus Is Coming Soon." What do they mean? They are trying to tell the world that this is about the time when Jesus is going to come to judge the world and reign on earth for one thousand years with his saints. How do they know? Does the Bible teach this? Surely, the Bible teaches that Christ will come one day to judge the world. But when that day will come, no person on earth and not any angel in heaven knows. Those who have been, through speculations and guesses, claiming for years that Jesus was going to come soon, have themselves proven the fact over and over again that they are false teachers. Because Jesus has not come, yet for years they have been claiming that He was going to come SOON! This is not to say that Jesus will never come back. He

will surely come one day, because the Bible says so. But when? We don't know. There is nothing wrong in saying that Jesus will come back one day to judge the world as the Apostle Paul, in Acts 17: 31, taught, but to say that Jesus is coming soon is misleading and deceiving people into believing something which the Lord Himself did not teach. We are told that when the disciples of Jesus had asked Him, if He would tell them when He would come back? His answer to them was: "Of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angel of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24: 36). Did you note what Christ said? Listen, He said, No one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven know when He would come back. How foolish it would be for one to say today then, "Jesus is coming soon," as though he knows, when Jesus Himself taught that no one knows when He would come back!

Concerning the second coming of Christ, the inspired Apostle Paul wrote in the Bible: "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5: 1, 2). Peter, the Apostle, also exhorted Christians by saying, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3: 10). From this we not only learn that Jesus will come suddenly, unannounced, but we also learn the fact that when He will come back at that moment the earth and whatsoever will be on earth will be burned up. This means then that Jesus is not going to come back to reign on earth for one thousand years, as some people erroneously believe and teach. Again, after announcing to His disciples that no one, not even the angels in heaven, know when He would come back, Christ went on to say, "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," said Jesus, "for you do not know

what hour your Lord is coming. But know this that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Matthew 24 : 37-39 and 42-44).

Now let me tell you about one such man who had predicted not only the year, but also the month and the date of Christ's coming back. His name was William Miller. He had over a million followers in America who had believed his announcement that Christ was going to come on October 23, 1844. Many of his followers, we are told, had disposed of all their earthly possessions, had quit their jobs, had stopped sending their children to schools, and had streamed out to the countryside to see the great event of Christ's coming, on October 23, 1844, the day Mr. Miller had predicted for Christ's coming. They came out early morning, and waited whole day and all night, but they waited in vain, because Christ didn't come. After the sun rose the next day and the world still intact, Miller's fatigued followers made their sorrowful return to their respective homes and businesses, if fortunate enough to have either left! Like Miller many other false teachers have also tried to do the same through the years. But in doing so they have all revealed their own ignorance of what the Scriptures teach on the subject of Christ's second coming. The sad thing, however, is that such false teachers still exist and they are misleading people by setting different dates of Christ's coming, and people are so gullibly believing them !

John, one of the Apostles, had warned : "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4 : 1). If one wants to know the exact size of a piece of cloth, all one has to do is take a measuring tape or rod, and measure it with that. The same would be true if one wants to know the exact weight of something. One can weigh that thing by putting it on a weighing machine to know the right weight. Now, how can we know today that what one is preaching is right and is truly the unadulterated word of God? By comparing it

with what is written in the Bible. That is the only sure way to test the spirit, or to ascertain whether a teaching is right or wrong. Sad to say, though, most people today take no pains as the Bereans of the Bible were doing in the first century by searching the Scriptures daily to find out whether those things, the Apostle Paul and Silas had taught them, were really so. (Acts 17:11). Today most people are so gullible that they can take and digest any thing preached to them in the name of the Bible. And this is the reason why there are today so many conflicting denominational churches in the world; they wear such names and titles which are not even mentioned in the Bible; they teach and practice different things, yet claim that they all believe in the same Bible; they worship in ways not authorised in the New Testament of Christ. When Christ was on earth he had pictured such people by saying, "These people draw near to me with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8, 9).

While it is true that no one knows when Christ will come back, the Apostle Peter, however, warned when he said, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus has not come back so far, because He is not willing that any soul should perish in sin and in ignorance, but He wants for all people to repent or change their ways before His coming, so that He might save them. At Jesus' coming, according to the Bible, the material world on earth and the earth itself will pass away. (2 Peter 3:10; John 2:17). Therefore He is not going to come back on earth, rather He will come up in the clouds, up in the air, where His resurrected saints will meet Him, so that they will go to live with Him eternally in heaven. (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). "And these," picturing the judgment, Christ had spoken about the unrighteous or the unprepared, "will go away into ever-lasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46). When Christ will come back? No one knows, and we cannot know. But we know for sure that if we have believed in Him with all our hearts that He had died on the cross

for our sins: and have repented of our sins: and have been baptized for the remission of our sins; and are trying our best to live on earth each day, as God expects from all of us, by following Christ as our example, then at His coming He will receive us and will take us with Him in heaven, where the Bible says, God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; where there will be no more death; nor sorrow; nor crying. And there shall be no night there; where they need no lamp, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them the light, and they shall reign with Him forever and ever. (Revelation 21 : 4 and 22 : 5). The most important thing to ponder is, however, will we be ready to meet Jesus and to go with Him when He will come ??

Dedicated To The Lord

J.C. Choate

The word 'dedicate' suggests the idea of being set apart or being committed to a particular work. It means to give one's self wholly to a task. That is what one basically does when he becomes a Christian. There are a number of other expressions that come to mind when one thinks of dedication. For instance, we read of putting the Lord and his kingdom first (Matthew 6 : 33), of denying one's self to follow Christ (Luke 9 : 23), and that of being faithful unto death. (Revelation 2 : 10).

Genuine dedication, however, does not usually come immediately. Time is needed for it to grow and develop in one. Sometime when we see people who have dedication, we assume that they have always had it, but perhaps we are not aware of all of the years of experience that brought them to that point. We think of the Apostles, who were willing to suffer and die for their faith, as men of great dedication. But we must realize that they were called of the Lord, trained by him, and then the Holy Spirit guided them in their work. But along the way they had their problems and moments of weakness. Look at any of the great servants of the Lord in the Bible, and you will find that they were all human and subject to mistake. Even though that was true,

they did not give up and quit. They continued to follow their Lord, and they grew in the faith, and likewise in their commitment.

Sometimes we wonder why a foreigner will come to our country to serve the Lord. Back home he could have had a much better life, physically and spiritually. He had everything, even luxuries. But he left his family members and loved ones to come to a part of the world where he must live on far less, do without many of the things that he grew up with, and to hardly get a word of thanks for his work. What caused him to do that? Dedication! He put the Lord before himself.

We see some of our local brethren that glory in taking advantage of the foreign missionary. He is easily deceived. Money is the name of the game. Maybe there is a job. Perhaps one can use him to go to a foreign country. He might even be able to immigrate with his family to that nation that has more to offer materially. What's wrong here? Young Christians, immature Christians, thinking only of themselves, and physical needs and wants at that. There is no dedication here, at least there is no dedication to the Lord. Such people would be dedicated only to that of satisfying their own wants and desires. The church cannot make much progress as long as the members are at this stage in their Christian life.

For the church here or anywhere to grow and to do the work that it needs to do, then it is going to have to have dedicated people. This includes men and women who will stand with the Lord regardless of the consequences. Preachers are needed that will preach the truth of God with or without support. They will go to the poor and rich, to the cities and villages, or wherever they are needed to proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. They won't be thinking about what they will get out of it, but what they can give to help the Lord's cause to grow and to spread. Members are needed that will give of themselves and what they have to help the local congregation to grow. They are ready to volunteer, to work and use their abilities. They are not asking what they will receive, but what they can give. They are the kind of people that can be counted on to do their part. They are always on the job.

When the church is young in a country, you see local

congregations and members that are struggling to survive. Congregations are often small and greatly dependent on outside help. Members cannot always be depended on. Most of them being young, then one day they are strong but the next day they may be weak. But with the passing of time, the ones that stay on gradually become more sure of themselves. As they study and grow in the faith, they become stronger individually and collectively. They have more experience now in preaching and teaching and dealing with their problems and the problems of others. This leads to more stability. The children of the older members grow up to become members themselves and the congregation may eventually be in position to appoint elders and deacons. There are preachers and teachers among them that have great ability, and have come to the place where they have gained the respect of their brothers and sisters in Christ. They are now more confident of themselves and can make decisions on their own. They see needs and opportunities, and they begin to confront them and to accept their own responsibilities. They are growing in knowledge, in faith, in ability, and in dedication.

In any congregation, there will be members at different levels of growth. But even where you have a few, and where a congregation is beginning to act like a mature congregation, then you know that as others grow that the church will be even stronger and will be able to bear a greater abundance of fruit for the Lord.

It is a genuine pleasure to be associated with brethren like this and they themselves find a greater amount of satisfaction when they are in position to do their own work, and to make a real contribution to the Lord's cause in their city and country. It is when the church reaches this point in their dedication that they are going to really accomplish something for the Lord. We pray that we will see more and more of this in the years to come.

“Follow Me”

Philip Wilkerson

There are several occasions recorded in the gospel where

Jesus Christ made the request: "Follow me." We find this phrase on his lips early in his public ministry. For example, he made this request when he was in the process of picking the twelve men who would later become the Apostles. In Matthew 4 : 19 he said to the fishermen Peter and Andrew, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Three years later, near the close of his earthly ministry, Christ was still making the same request. Shortly before he was betrayed and crucified Jesus said in John 12 : 26 "If anyone serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there my servant will be also."

Why would such a request have been so important to Christ ? Why did he repeat it again and again while he was on earth, living among men ? One of the cardinal principles of education says that repetition increases learning. Certainly, we could call Jesus the Master Teacher, and certainly, this concept of following him must have been very important, otherwise he would not have repeated it so often.

We all have a tendency to follow someone, or some group, or some idea. It seems to be a natural inclination, built into our human psychology. Of course, Christ, being God and thus being the Creator of man, understood this inclination. In Matthew 10 : 35-36, the Bible says that "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."

And so, because Christ was the Good Shepherd (John 10 : 10), he called his sheep saying, "Follow me." In John 10 : 27-28 Christ reveals why following him is so important: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." Unless we hear Christ and follow him, we do not have his protection as our shepherd. We do not have eternal life if we stray from the path Christ has asked us to follow.

We see also that this phrase is very limiting. To have eternal life, we must follow Christ and Christ only. When Christ says,

“Follow me,” he is excluding all other leaders. When it comes to our spiritual welfare, we are not to follow anyone but Christ. Christ himself said it like this : “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.” Christ will lead us to God the Father, if we will but hear and obey him.

Matthew 17 records a very important event in the life of Christ. He took two of his disciples, Peter and John up to a high mountain, and there they witnessed the transfiguration. They beheld Christ in his glorified state, conversing with Moses and Elijah. Moses was highly esteemed among the Jews, and they considered themselves his followers. Elijah was the most revered of all the prophets and was the embodiment of the concept that God had spoken directly to the Jewish nation. The event on the mountain signaled a transfer of leadership. God the Father spoke from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him !” (Matthew 17 : 5).

That phrase means that we are to hear and obey only Christ. In other words, we are to follow only Christ. Any other spiritual leader, whether prophet or angel or even a god—if that leader speaks words contrary to the words of Christ or his inspired apostles, we are not bound to follow that leader. We follow Christ because he is the Good Shepherd. We follow Christ because only he can give his followers eternal life. We listen to Christ because we will be judged by his words. Christ said in John 12 : 48 “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.”

What has Christ commanded his followers to do that they may have eternal life ? It is very simple. But it requires that all your trust and allegiance be placed in Christ. If you want to be his follower, you must understand that he requires all your devotion and all your commitment. Otherwise, you cannot be his follower.

Once you decide to be a follower of Christ, then, as commanded in John 20 : 31, you must sincerely believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. You must make a decision to quit sinning and start living your life as a Christian. This is called “repenting” (Luke 13 : 3). You must tell others of your faith in

Christ as your Good Shepherd and Savior (Romans 10 : 9 -10). You must be immersed (baptized) in water (Acts 2 : 38; Romans 6 : 4). Baptism symbolizes the cleansing of your sins by Christ's blood. (Ephesians 1 : 7). Baptism also symbolizes your birth into God's family (John 3 : 3-5) and places you into Christ's body, the Church (Galatians 3 : 27; 2 Timothy 2 : 10; Ephesians 5 : 23; Ephesians 1 : 22-23). And then, you must dedicate your life to Christ, studying His word, meeting with other Christians, and pointing others to the Son of God you follow, Jesus Christ.

Even after almost twenty centuries, Christ is still asking men to follow him. Won't you answer and become his follower today ?

For His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Charles E. Cobb

God's love never fails. It never waxes old. It never sleeps. At the end of verse in the One Hundred Thirty-Sixth Psalm, the statement is made, "For His steadfast love endures forever". (RSV)

How grateful we should be to God for the "great love where-with He has loved us". It is the love of God that protects us— for, "the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" (Psalm 121 : 6). His love gives us life, opportunity and hope. The love of God is not fickle : it is steadfast. The love of God endures.

Paul, the apostle, was made to exclaim, "For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8 : 38-38). We may rest assured that God's love will never fail.

If, then, there is a failure, it will be our love for God. Only one way has God provided for us to show our love for Him. "For this is the love of God, that you keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5 : 3). God loves

His children as deeply as love can ever be for "God is love". But how deeply do you love God? Could it be said of your love for God, as it can be said of God's love for you. "For His steadfast love endures forever?"

Your love for God will prompt you to fully engage in His service. How much do you love God? Our Savior said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind". (Matthew 22 : 37).

Salvation and the Great Commission

Rod Rutherford

A Vital Question

The most important question in the world is the question, "What must I do to be saved?" How one answers this question will determine whether he spends eternity in heaven, or in hell. Our Lord Jesus Christ very clearly, plainly and simply answered this crucial question for us in the final commission given to his disciples before his ascension back to heaven. Let us turn our attention to the three passages where the Great Commission of our Lord is located so that we may learn from him what we must do to have eternal life.

Man Sinned

The scriptures teach that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3 : 23). Since "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6 : 23) and the "death" spoken of has reference to eternal separation from God, in hell; the eternal fire (Matthew 25 : 41, 46), the "second death" (Revelation 21 : 8), then all who have sinned, ought by the demands of justice to be confined eternally to hell.

God's Grace

God, however, loves man in spite of man's rebellion (sin). He desires to save man from the punishment he deserves. Therefore, God devised the plan of salvation through which he could still be just, but at the same time, show mercy. "For God

so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3 : 16). God initiated his plan solely on his own grace and goodness, not because man deserved it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4 : 10). Romans 5 : 6-8 also expresses the same thought, as do many other verses. In the light of this, we can say with the inspired apostle-Paul in Ephesians 2 : 10 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." If the above verses teach anything at all, they teach that man could never have merited God's saving him; that he could not have (in any way) ever atoned for his sins by his own goodness; that without the gracious intervention of God on his behalf, he would be doomed to suffer the just punishment for his sins in the hell created for the devil and his angels; and that man could never earn merit, or deserve his salvation. Works of human righteousness (of man's devising) are completely out of the picture as pertains to man's salvation (cf. Titus 3 : 4-7).

Death of Christ

Man's salvation was made possible when Jesus died on the cross in his place as sin-bearer, and sin offering (II Corinthians 5 : 19-21). The death of Christ for our sins, his burial, and his resurrection from the dead on the third day constitute the foundation of the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 15 : 1-4), and man's only hope for salvation. Christ, then, is the only Savior; man's only way to God and to eternal life (John 8 : 24; 14 : 6; Hebrews 5 : 8, 9; Acts 4 : 11-12). This is why it is imperative that the gospel be preached to every nation, every creature, the whole world (Matthew 28 : 19-20; Mark 16 : 15-16; Luke 24 : 44-47).

Sinners Must Hear

The question next arises as to how man may receive the salvation from his sins with the resulting promise of eternal life

which God, by his grace, has made possible. The Bible is clear, plain, and simple. (One would hardly expect it to be otherwise on such an important and vital issue). After his death, burial and resurrection, our Lord gave marching orders to his disciples. We have a clear, concise account of this in Matthew 28 : 19-20. Jesus, our Lord, having stated that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," next commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen."

Must Learn And Be Baptized

Now, please note that the Gospel was to be taught to all nations. Christianity is a "taught religion," unlike Judaism, wherein one was born into a covenant relationship with God by physical birth and then had to be taught God's will. One must hear the Gospel and understand it in order to have faith in it (Romans 10 : 17). Also, please observe that those who were taught the Gospel were to be baptized.

Mark 16 : 15-16

Let us now turn our attention to the second account of our Lord's commission. It is found in Mark 16 : 15-16 : "And he said unto them, 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."

Believe And Be Baptized

Please notice that the command once again is to go with the gospel. It must be preached in order for men to hear it. Those who hear it must then believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

What Jesus Did Not Say

The Lord did not say, "He that believes is saved, and shall be baptized"—as many modern folk actually believe and teach. They thereby imply that one is saved by belief alone without baptism; but the Lord clearly placed both belief and baptism before salvation from one's sins.

Sometimes those unwilling to accept the simple statement of our Lord insist that, "He didn't say, 'He that believeth not, and is baptized not, shall be condemned.'" But this would make the Lord redundant; for, if one does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he is lost already (John 3 : 18, 36), and the matter of baptism is completely irrelevant to him !

Luke 24 : 46-47

Let us now turn our attention to the account of the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Luke 24 : 45-47 : "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and he said unto them. Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Repentance And Remission

Here we have the foundation facts of the gospel : Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and arose from the dead the third day (cf. I Corinthians 15 : 1-4). Based on this, "repentance" and "remission," or forgiveness of sins, should be preached in his name to all nations. Here we see the gospel must be preached; and those who respond in repentance are promised remission of sins.

We must not do as the Jehovah's Witnesses (so-called) and other cults do, and take only part of what the Bible teaches on a subject. Nor dare we do (as so many cults do) and attempt array one scripture against another. But we will endeavor to see the whole picture presented by God in his word pertaining to man's salvation. Therefore, when we place these three accounts side by side, we will see the following elements :

1. Christ's disciples are to take the gospel to every creature in the whole world.
2. The gospel and only the gospel (Galatians 1 : 6-9) must be preached.
3. Those who hear the gospel will respond by : a. Believing.
b. Repenting of sins. c. Being baptized.
4. The result to those who respond in this way is that they are **SAVED**, or have their sins remitted (forgiven).

"By Grace Through Faith"

The fact that our Lord has required that we must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of our sins, and be baptized in order to be saved, does not in any way nullify the grace of God. God has provided man's salvation as a gift (Romans 6 : 23; Ephesians 2 : 8); but man must reach out and receive God's gracious gift. He does this by responding in the manner described in the accounts of the Great Commission of our Lord as discussed above.

Sinner's Move

Dear reader, are you saved? Do you have eternal life? Salvation from your past sins and the promise of eternal life with God in Heaven can be yours!

Jesus has made it possible by his death, burial and resurrection. You must, however, comply with the simple terms laid down by him in his Great Commission. Will you not do so without delay?

Who/What is A "Christian"

Yarbrough Leigh

Many and varied are the answers which men give to this question. Even among learned men, and leaders in the various religious communions, it would be impossible to find a unanimous view as to the correct answer. All of this points up the unique, irreplaceable function of the Holy Scriptures; namely: to give an authoritative, infallible answer to matters pertaining to the faith of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the only source of a correct answer to the question: "Who/What Is A Christian." Let us look at just a few examples in the New Testament which will help in finding the answer.

A Christian Is A "Disciple"

In giving the "Great Commission," Jesus said to his disciples,

“Go ye therefore and teach (KJV) or “make disciples of” (ASV) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28 : 19). From this, we know that a Christian is one who has been led by the gospel message to become a follower, or a disciple of the Lord; and, in consequence of this conviction, has committed himself to that discipleship in being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in obedience to our Lord’s instruction.

We read in Acts 11 : 26 that “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” These passages are sufficient to demonstrate that the terms “Christian” and “disciple” are synonymous. One who is not a “disciple” of Christ cannot be a “Christian” in that non-disciple state.

What, If Any,

Are The Terms Of Discipleship ?

We find some light on this question in John 8 : 31-32, 34-36, as follows : “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth, shall make you free... Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever : but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” From this we learn that a “true,” or a “genuine,” or one who is “indeed”,—(i.e. : “who is in fact”) a disciple, is one who not only hears and begins to follow Jesus, but one who “continues in his word.” And, it is this kind of discipleship that leads the Lord to “set us free from bondage to sin.” Only the Son can set us free from sin; and he frees from sin those who are his “disciples indeed” those who keep on following him. This sheds light on the question : “Who/What Is A Christian.”

Although Jesus was speaking within the framework of the especially dangerous times of his highly controversial personal ministry; nonetheless, his words recorded by Luke in his account of the Gospel give further light on the answer to our question :

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross. and come after me, cannot be my disciple. . . So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14 : 27, 33). Read the context in which these two verses are found (Luke 14 : 25-33) to get a more full view of what it means to “bear one’s cross and follow Jesus !” You will see that the cost of “discipleship” can be very high, indeed; even to forsaking the approval and companionship of closest and dearest among family and friends !

Many additional passages could be cited pertaining to “discipleship,” but these will suffice to show that a “disciple” is one who obeys and follows the leadership and example of Jesus, no matter what it costs in material things, and even in the bonds that we have cherished which tie us to family and loved ones.

A Christian Is One Who Has Been Cleansed By The Blood Of Christ

Speaking of the “cup” in the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said, “For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26 : 28). Again, Paul wrote, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1 : 7); and many other passages, as well. Also, after becoming Christians, it is this blood of Christ which keeps us clean; as we note : “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1 : 7). Therefore, a “Christian” is one who has been cleansed, and keeps on being cleansed, by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for our redemption—the purchase price for our souls (Acts 20 : 28; Ephesians 1 : 14; I Corinthians 6 : 20).

But, what is necessary on our part to receive that cleansing ? This very question was raised on Pentecost by men who had been convinced of their error in calling for the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 2 : 37), as they asked of Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do ?” To these men, who had already become convinced that “God hath made that same

Jesus," whom they, in a sense, had crucified, "both Lord and Christ," the apostles answered: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And, in response, Peter was answering precisely according to the instruction he had received pertaining to the "remission of sins." Luke recorded our Lord's instruction on that point, in these words: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). On that Pentecost, in Jerusalem, the Spirit came upon the apostles in keeping with the Lord's promise. Peter preached from the prophets that it had been written that Christ "must suffer, and be raised the third day" (Acts 2:14-36). When men believed his message, and wanted to know what they must do, he answered, still using the language of the Lord: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Summarizing

A Christian is one who has received with unquestioning faith the good news of redemption provided by divine grace by the sacrificial death of Christ and his resurrection the third day, has confessed that faith, and has committed himself to Christ in obeying his command of baptism in his name for the remission of sins; one who has become a "disciple indeed," continuing in his word; and, denying self, has taken up his cross and is following Jesus, having repented of all rebellion against God.

The Spirit of Compromise

Dabney Phillips

Throughout history men have sought to compromise God's truth. Compromise has been the bargaining tool of the devil

since Eden. Men compromise the truth, women their virtue, youths their honesty, preachers their pulpits, elders their sheep, etc. God is relegated to a place of convenience.

WHAT DO MEN COMPROMISE ?

Men compromise the truth of God as illustrated by Adam, Nadab and Abihu, David and Bathsheba. Solomon compromised the truth with his multiple wives. The purity of the church and its gospel is compromised. The truth must remain unadulterated (Galatians 1:6-9). The preacher may be a good man, have a good family, loves people and NOT preach the truth. If you back false teaching, you become partakers of the error (II John 9-10). There are those who compromise their convictions and consciences. Most of our folks know the truth, but the conscience becomes seared.

WHY DO MEN COMPROMISE ?

The tug and love of the world is extremely strong (II Timothy 4:10; James 4:4). Jesus said it is impossible to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Others compromise due to their love of preeminence, like Diotrephes who sold out to the majority. There are those in the church who have the philosophy of "rule or ruin." We sin when we let this type of leadership get away with it. Frequently compromisers let the love of their friends and families influence them wrongly. Many of their families are in known sin. Jesus laid it on the line in Matthew 10:34-39. Our sentimental attachments dare NOT alter our love for God (Matthew 6:33).

WHEN DO MEN COMPROMISE ?

Men rationalize and then they forget the Lord. One cannot bargain with the devil and come out on top. Forget the multitudes and fight for God. People socialize with error and its exponents. Evil companionships still corrupt good morals (I Corinthians 15:33). Fellowship with error rubs off. When we rationalize, socialize with error, then we apostatize. Worldly allurements and denominational power are powerful influences in our world. Some wonder, "How could so many be so wrong?" Do not take the first step away from God ;

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO STOP COMPROMISE ?

The wise man said in Proverbs 23 : 23, "Buy the truth and sell it not." We must continue to be strong in the Lord and His Word. Constant vigilance is the price of freedom (I Peter 5 : 7, 8). Pay the price of redemption. It is a four letter word spelled SELF. This will take time, effort, tears, and sacrifice. Never consider giving in to the devil. Scream from the housetops for your uncompromising convictions. Remember Moses when he said, "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

CONCLUSION

There is a pattern and we believe that there is one! God wants us to follow this pattern (John 16 : 13; Hebrews 8 : 5; II Timothy 1 : 13). The New Testament is the plumb line to straighten out crooked walls (I Peter 4 : 11). Church unity is not attained by the amalgamation of doctrines, but on a common revealed faith. God spoke once, and He still speaks through the written word (Hebrews 4 : 12). We are not "moss bsacked" traditionalists. or unloving traditionalists. But we, do insist on loyalty to Christ and His teaching (I John 5 : 3). There must be the constant calling of people back to God and the simple gospel. (John 6 : 44).

Be Of Good Courage

B.C. Goodpasture

When the Israelites were about to do battle with the Syrians and the Ammonites, Joab said : "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God" (II Samuel 10 : 12). This was a ringing exhortation and challenge to his people. Someone has defined courage as "fighting with the handle after the sword has been broken." Courage is that quality of mind which enables one to meet danger with firmness and without fear.

The finest examples of courage are to be found in the Bible, and not in secular history. This does not mean that secular history does not afford many examples of unusual courage. Winkelreid, the Swiss patriot, gathered a sheaf of Austrian spears to his bosom to open the way for his countrymen through the ranks of the enemy. Luther was determined to meet his enemies in Worms, even "if the devils were as numerous as the tiles on the steeples." After the battle of Marengo had been lost. Napoleon came to his drummer boy and said: Beat a retreat!" The boy replied: "Sir, I can beat a charge. My master taught me to beat a charge, but not a retreat. I do not know how to beat a retreat. I can beat a charge that will wake up the dead. I beat the charge at Lodi and the Pyramids. Shall I beat a charge?" Napoleon was so impressed that he said: "Beat a charge!" The boy beat a charge, which rallied a defeated army to renew the battle with such courage and determination that Marengo is numbered among the outstanding victories of the "Little Corsican." After this battle, Napoleon had medals struck for its heroes. On one side the metal read, "Marengo": on the other side, "I was there." The charge of the light brigade at Balaklava and Pickett's charge at Gettysburg were brilliant and courageous. And of the Lacedaemonians it was said that they did not ask, "How many are the enemy?" but "Where are they?" But, for sheer moral courage we must go for our finest examples to Noah, preaching to the antediluvians; Joseph, fleeing the wicked advances of Potiphar's wife; Moses, demanding of Pharaoh, Israel's release; Gideon and his three hundred, routing the Midianites; Daniel, purposing not to defile himself with the king's wine and meat; Paul, preaching on Mars Hill and before Nero; and such like, who have immortalized sacred history.

One of the crying needs of our time is courage . . . courage to live right; courage to preach the truth, without fear or favor, to both saint and sinner. "Be of good courage," brother; "let us play the men" for the church of our Lord and the truth of His gospel. When the shattered remnants of the Old Guard were called on to surrender at the battle of Waterloo, they replied: "We know how to die, but not to surrender." The apostles knew how to die for "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," but

they did not know how to surrender. "Add to your faith virtue"—courage.

How To Develop A Better Attitude

Ken Tyler

Webster defines attitude as "one's disposition." Other words as "mental state, emotion, mood and opinion" are used by him to define attitude. Our attitude is our most important quality. The attitude we have determines what kind of person we are.

Every person should desire to have a good attitude. A good attitude is essential for a proper relationship at home, work, school and yes, in the church. Our attitude affects every aspect of our lives. In this article I want to make five suggestions that I hope will help all of us develop a better attitude.

1. **THINK POSITIVE.** Most people who have bad attitudes are very negative people. There is always something wrong, never anything right. Individuals who fit into this category are usually very unhappy and hard to get along with. A better attitude begins with being a positive, optimistic person. Don't allow yourself to become so negative that you cannot function as a child of God.

2. **LEARN TO COPE WITH FAILURE.** This is one of the most difficult aspects of life. We all fail, both spiritually and in our day to day activities of this life. How we handle failure will determine what kind of life we have. David and Peter both failed miserably, but neither allowed it to destroy them. Judas, on the other hand, went out and hanged himself. Remember, you never fall until you quit trying,

3. **KEEP BUSY DOING THINGS FOR OTHERS.** It's very difficult to have a bad attitude if you give your life to others. It is true that "...It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts

20 : 35). Individuals who fill their lives doing for others are the most happy people on the face of this earth. Remember, Jesus "...went about doing good..." (Acts 10 : 38).

4. **DON'T LET SICKNESS, SUFFERING AND DEATH CAUSE YOU TO BECOME BITTER.** It would do us all good to read Job 1 and 2 often. Unfortunately, sickness and death are a part of this life. Only a deep abiding faith in God will see us through. May we never forget that our eternal abode, heaven, is a place free from sickness, suffering and death (Revelation 21 : 4).

5. **PRAY CONSTANTLY THAT YOUR ATTITUDE MAY BE RIGHT.** God will help all of us to have a better attitude. The question is, do we want to change? Are we satisfied with a bad attitude and a miserable life? If we want the right kind of attitude God will help us get it. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5 : 17).

It's my prayer that these five suggestions will help you and me develop a better attitude. Many people will be in hell because they had a terrible attitude. May we not let it happen to us.

Doing Nothing At All

Anthony E. Emmons, Jr.

The poem below by an author unknown to us, pinpoints one of our greatest weaknesses :

He made no mistakes, he took no wrong turns.

He never fumbled the ball.

He never went down 'neath the weight of the load,

He simply did nothing at all.

He lost no hard fight in defense of the right.

He never bled with his back to the wall,

He never felt faint in his climb to the light,

He simply did nothing at all.

So death came nigh, life had slipped by,

He feared for the judgment hall.

And when asked why, he said with a sigh,

"I've done nothing at all."

O, God will pardon your blunders, my friends,

Or regard with pity your fall.

But the one great sell, that surely means hell,

Is simply to do nothing at all.

This poem seems to agree with James : "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4 : 17).

It is a strong suspicion with us that here lies one of our greatest weaknesses. Many of us will not commit some of the heinous and disgraceful sins such as murder, adultery, fornication, idolatry, etc. But, how many of us will be caught just "doing nothing at all," or as James puts it, not doing what we know to do? If all of us did just what we already know is right, just think how much difference it would make.

This is sometimes called the "sin of omission"—things we omit to do although they are right and commanded of God. Most of us realize, down deep within our souls, that the "sins of omission" are more likely to send us to hell than the other kind.

It would be wonderful if each Christian would resolve to do what he already knows to do. Of course, we need to increase our knowledge of God and His Word. But, what a wonderful thing it would be if all of us did what we already know is right.

We Shall Be Like Him

Fred Dillon

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3 : 2).

One of the widely-asked questions by mankind is, "What shall we be like when Christ comes again?" Another is, "Will we recognize one another?"

John, in his epistle to Christians surely gives us sufficient answer for this world: "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." That ought to be answer enough—to know that when Christ comes to claim His own, we will be like Him! What a wonderful thought—to be like the Savior, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Wonderful Counsellor, the One in whom God has placed all authority in heaven and earth...the pure, clean, holy Son of God!

Is it an "unlearned and foolish question" which we should avoid? Those things we can know surely are not foolish and not unlearned. One thing we can know for certain is that we shall be changed, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15: 52).

The Holy spirit further assures us through Paul, that we will have a new, incorruptible and immortal being. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (I Corinthians 15: 54). Paul further assures us that we shall have victory, and that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

John goes further in the book of Revelation informing us that there will be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" shall (Revelation 21: 4).

In the last chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we are told of the tree of life, the pure river of water of life, and that we actually shall see the face and reign forever and ever with Christ (Revelation 22: 1-5).

All of these promises are too wonderful for the imagination. God even tells us through Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Corinthians 2 : 9).

Consider all the magnificent sights, all the melodious sounds and every beautiful thought or imagination of mankind and realize that none of these or all of these together can compare with those things God has ready for His children, the heirs of God and the joint heirs with Christ.

And yet, through all of this, through all these exceeding great and precious promises, this truth stands out, "We shall be like Him."

This is why the name Christian is so important—Christ-like or Christ-one! God wants us to be like Christ here, so that we can be like Him. When He does descend from heaven with a shout and with the mighty angels—when the dead in Christ shall rise and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thessalonians 4 : 16-17).

Think of the One we will be like! "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2 : 22-23). The One "Who His own self, bare our sins in His body on the tree." He surely is "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

Surely it is so important to have "the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2 : 5); to know that He made Himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man (yes, our likeness). He became like we are, so we could become like He is! This took a great humbling of Himself, "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross."

Because of all of this, God also "hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name" (Philippians 2 : 9).

Is it any wonder then that God directs us to hear and learn of Christ (John 6 : 45); to put our faith and trust in Him (John 8 : 24); to turn to Him in genuine repentance, spurred by Godly sorrow

(II Corinthians 7:10); to make our confession before men in order that we might be confessed before the Father Himself (Matthew 10:32); to be baptized into Christ, to have a part in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:11-13); and then to continue in His Word, and truly be one of His disciples (John 8:31-32).

What in this life or any life could be more vital than being like Christ, to be able to see Him as He is? Surely, "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:3).

Man can achieve many honors and goals in this life. He can climb many mountains and cross many seas. He can win many victories and gain great authority. But, in the final analysis, the only lasting, ever-enduring goal should be to be LIKE HIM, the One who left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

To Save Souls We Must Cooperate With God

Edsel Burleson

Through the centuries the value of co-operation has repeatedly been recognized. Every great task is made easier when the combined efforts of the participants can be had. The sooner Christians realize the role of each toward the salvation of the lost, the sooner great results will be forth-coming.

Marcus Aurelius, a great Roman statesman and philosopher, and later Emperor, once said: "We have been for mutual help, like the feet, like the hands, like the rows of upper and lower teeth. To act in opposition to one another is therefore contrary to nature."

Many would not think of openly opposing an effort of another Christian in the interest of a lost soul; yet, the very failure of one to lend his encouragement is a hindrance.

Paul explained cooperation in I Corinthians 12 : 14-18 : "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

All goes well as one travels along the high-way as long as all four tires are fully inflated. When one tire decides not to "cooperate," the rest are then ineffective. A chain may be used for an important job; but if one link decides not to "cooperate," it destroys the work of the others.

The wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt by cooperation. Nehemiah said, "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof : for the people had a mind to work" (4 : 6).

God can grow trees, raise mountains, populate the world, or fill the space with stars; but he has arranged that in the salvation of souls and the expansion of his kingdom we must cooperate with him to the completion of the task.

"Christ has no hands but our hands
To do his work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in his way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how he died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to his side."