

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 25

July 1994

No. 3

EDITORIAL

Baptized For The Dead

1 Corinthians 15 chapter of the Bible has been rightly called "The Resurrection chapter." One of the most prominent and great doctrines of the Bible has been the resurrection of all people who have ever lived or will live until Christ comes back on the day of judgment to reward the just and the unjust. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 the apostle said, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, when He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

In essence, the apostle was teaching that Christ's resurrection was the greatest proof of our own resurrection, which will occur at His coming to judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:31). The God of heaven who raised Christ, the Man, from the dead, will also, by His power, make us alive, as He did Christ, after His death. It is in this context, the apostle, at first Corinthians 15:29 asked the Corinthians: "Otherwise what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?"

Some have held that there was a custom then of baptizing people, living persons, for the benefit of persons who had died without baptism. It is reasoned that in 1 Cor. 15:29 Paul was using an argumentum-ad-hominem, that is, an argument based upon what some people were doing at Corinth. However, has such a custom existed there or at any other place then certainly the apostle Paul would have rebuked it, as he did in every other case, instead of using it as an example to teach the most important truth of resurrection! The apostle rebuked the Corinthians when some of them were causing division in the church (1 Cor. 1:10-13 & 3:1-4). He also rebuked them for their immorality that was defiling the church. (1 Cor. 5). Again, the apostle reprimanded the Corinthians for their corrupting the institution of the Lord's Supper, as we read in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Paul, the apostle, in 1 Corinthians 15 chapter, was specifically dealing with the doctrine of resurrection, which certain false teachers were denying. He argued that since Christ rose from the dead, so in the same manner all will rise from the dead. And, it is in the hope of the resurrection of the dead that they were baptized. The Corinthians were baptized. (Acts 18:8). Before going through the act of baptism one must repent or die to sin. (Acts: 2:38). And that is what the Corinthians had precisely done. Before their baptism, burial in the water-grave of baptism, they had died to sin. They were put in the grave of water as dead men and women. A living person is not buried but a dead person is. Their baptism was a "planting" in the likeness of the burial of Christ, and in the likeness of His resurrection from the dead. They had gone in the grave of water, through their baptism, as dead men and women, and were raised from the tomb of water to walk in the newness of life. (Romans 6:3-5). The inference is, their baptism was in the very likeness of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ. But, if Christ had not risen, and the dead rise not, then their emblematic burial in water and coming out of the watery tomb of baptism had no meaning! Why were they baptized for the dead? What must they do if the dead rise not? How vain a thing had their baptism been if there will be no resurrection? Must they stand by it or renounce it? Yes, the Corinthians were baptized for the dead, with the view of their own death to sin, through repentance, they were buried in the tomb of water and had come out of it declaring their own death and burial and resurrection to walk in the new Christian walk!!

The same apostle wrote the Colossians and said, "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12).

Continuing, he told them, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3). The Colossians were living indeed. But the apostle told them: "For you died". When did they die? Of course, before their baptism! They too were baptised for the dead like the Corinthians, as all others are. Don't baptize a living person! A living being cannot be baptized Scripturally. One must repent, die to the old man of sin, before going down into the tomb of baptism and coming out of it.

What Is Man?

J.C. CHOATE

The Psalmist David wrote, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8).

We will further see, though man became a sinner, that God was even willing to send his Son to die on a cruel cross that man might be saved. (John 3:16, 17). Now why did he do this?

Let's go to the scripture to see if we can determine why man is considered so important by God.

1. God created man from the dust of the earth. We read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground . . ." (Genesis 2:7). That is why we read that when man dies physically that his body will return to the dust of the earth. (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

2. Physically, man was not complete, so God created woman as a help meet for him. The record says, "And the Lord God said, It is not

good that man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him." (Genesis 2:18). Reading on, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: And they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:21-24). Now, man and woman, together, are complete. They can live together, help one another, and they can reproduce. With children, and their children having children, generation after generation can continue. The Apostle said, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." (1 Corinthians 11:8, 9). He continues, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." (1 Corinthians 11:11, 12). You can see then that both man and woman are dependent on each other and therefore it takes both of them to be complete. As a result, when the Bible speaks of man, it is often in the generic term, including both man and woman, male and female.

3. Man was God's crowning creation in that he gave him a soul. We read that after God made the heaven and earth, the animals, fowls, and fish of the sea, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26,27).

Please note that God said, "Let us." This included God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit as in the creation of the heaven and earth. (Genesis 1:1). Notice again that he said, "Let us make man in our image." This means that since the Godhead was Spirit (John 4:24), that man was given a spirit, soul, or inner being. It could not have meant that man was created in the likeness of God physically, since God has no physical body. God did create him physically but he also breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7). Then we read that when man dies physically that his spirit or soul will return to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

4. Man's soul is eternal in nature. It is called the inward man

(2 Corinthians 4:16) and the heavenly body. (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28). The soul can die in the sense of being separated from God, but it cannot die in the sense of ceasing to exist. The soul therefore is worth more than the world itself (Matthew 16:26), and when man is willing to hear the Lord, follow him, and obey his teaching, then he can be saved from his sins and have the hope of eternal life. (Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:23; Mark 16:16; John 14:1-3).

5. Man is to worship God, serve him, and be faithful unto death. (John 4:24; Matthew 6:24; Revelation 2:10). He brings honour and glory to God by doing all in his name (Colossians 3:17), and by being a member of his church. (Ephesians 3:21).

6. Man has a mind with the ability to think, learn, reason, make decisions, to choose, to believe, to obey, to worship, to speak, and to be faithful. He can also reject, deny, resist, disobey, and refuse God's love and salvation. To those who will accept God's grace and mercy, he will save, bless, and keep for himself. (Ephesians 2:8,9).

7. Man will have to give an account to God and live in eternity in heaven and hell. To whom much is given, much is expected. Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12). The Lord will judge us by his word (Acts 17:31; John 12:47,48), and we will be judged according to our works whether they be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10). The righteous will be given everlasting life but the wicked will be cast into eternal hell. (Matthew 25:46).

What is man? He is a dual being. He is physical and spiritual. He is flesh and spirit. He is mortal and he is immortal. He will die but he will live. He is you. He is me. He inhabits the earth but will eventually go to that eternal abode of the soul—to live in heaven or hell. How great he is! How honored he is! But how great his need. He needs God and salvation. God wants to save us and take us to heaven to live forevermore with him. Let us not disappoint him for his sake and especially for our sake.

Observe Christ's Resurrection

DILLARD THURMAN

One of the most arresting facts proclaimed in all the Bible is the

testimony of an open, empty tomb in the garden where they had laid the body of Jesus. What great resurgent vitality spread through the force of Christianity when two angels confronted the women that morning: "*And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen*" (Luke 24:5-6). This exploded a bomb-shell of religious activity, and to prove it true, Jesus appeared unto them repeatedly until His ascension back to the Father (Acts 1). How tragic that a great segment of the religious world ignores the Lord's table each first day of the week—where Jesus is remembered as the risen Lord (1 Cor. 11:23-28). Instead, many celebrate a cheap, man-made, flashy dress-parade called "Easter" for their annual observance.

Jesus Foretold His Resurrection

Even during His personal ministry, Jesus spoke of His approaching death to His disciples. But He also told of His triumphant rise from the tomb, and though vague terms were used at first to foretell it, He later became more specific: "*Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" The Jews didn't understand, "*But he spoke of the temple of his body*" (John 2:19, 21). He was more explicit when He spoke again, "*But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Matt. 12:39-40).

The teaching of Jesus about His resurrection may have confounded the disciples, and the Jews, but surely all would remember this when He arose the third day, thus fulfilling every word. At the last He found it necessary to be very open with His chosen apostles: "*Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.*" Not surprisingly, the disciples could not grasp the full meaning of this, "*And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken*" (Luke 18:31-34). No man had ever spoken such clear and concise prophecy concerning his personal death, much less foretelling

his own resurrection! This was proof that He was, and is, the Christ.

Transforming Effect of the Resurrection

The lives of the women who went to the tomb that morning were changed forever. After telling them that Jesus had risen, the angel said, *"And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you"* (Matt. 28:7). To reinforce this word, Jesus met them, *"Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me"* (v. 10). This is what Jesus had promised before, *"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee"* (Matt. 26:32).

The words of the women probably seemed like idle tales, and the disciples did not believe them (Luke 24:11). *"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted"* (Matt. 28:16-17). If they seemed to be overly cautious, put yourself in their place. Had they ever known anyone who arose from the dead, and walked among men again? I wonder if it was Thomas who doubted? But all doubts were soon removed, as Luke explains, *"The things which Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up; after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"* (Acts 1:1-3). He showed himself alive by infallible proofs, and was seen by His chosen apostles as witnesses of His resurrection.

Spiritual Force of His Resurrection

Never minimize the spiritual force of the resurrection of Jesus, for therein lies the proof of His divinity. After Jesus was raised from the dead, he charged the disciples, *"All authority hath been given unto me, both in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and made disciples of all nations . . . 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"* (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16). On Pentecost, Peter preached Christ as the crucified, but risen, Lord (Acts 2:22-24). He then quoted David, as a prophet speaking for God, who had said, *"He foreseeing this before spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, neither did his flesh see*

corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:31-32).

It was because of their being eyewitness that the apostles could boldly face a hostile world and proclaim the gospel of Christ. Remember also that it was by His resurrection that they were enabled to receive the Holy Spirit, *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).* No other force could account for their willingness to lay down their lives for His cause! The high priest and the council of the Jews lodged a charge against them, *"Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28).* Those early saints faced the constant threat of death, but they forged ahead, anyway: *"Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).* Except for the resurrection, how could all this be explained?

Paul's Life Changed by the Resurrection

Paul wrote that Jesus Christ is *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).* Paul was the last apostle to see the risen Lord (Acts 9:3-5), being chosen *"out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8).* But he set forth the strongest treatise on the resurrection of Jesus in all the Bible in 1 Cor. 15. In this lengthy chapter, Paul gave ample proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Study the *"IFs"* which Paul sows in this chapter, all connected to the resurrection: *"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain . . . If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some there is no resurrection? . . . If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen . . . If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . We are found false witnesses of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not . . . for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised, and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:2-19).*

Weigh carefully Paul's arguments regarding the resurrection of Jesus. He pointedly highlights the effect it had on each believer, and the substantiated faith in Him. The glorious triumph is reached as the apostle Paul continued, *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and*

become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

Our Relationship to His Resurrection

The lives of the saints are transformed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, "*For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).* Thus our primary obedience to His gospel reflects His death, burial and resurrection: "*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.*" (Col. 2:12). This is shown in more detail in Rom. 6:3-6, where the apostle shows we are baptized into the death of Jesus, buried with him, then raised with him. Thus Paul exhorts the saints, "*If then ye be risen together with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God' (Col. 3:1).*

Because Paul had died with Christ, been buried with Him in baptism and then raised with the Lord, he was willing to endure much: "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).* Paul, as well as Peter, enjoyed that "*Living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-4).* Because Christ was raised, we have assurance that we shall also be raised to be with God and His Son eternally.

The Error Of Balaam

JOHNNY RAMSEY

One of the most unusual characters in the Bible would have to be Balaam. His influence lived on long after the first mention in Numbers, because he is mentioned also in Revelation, the last book of the Holy Scriptures! The most precise reminder of Balaam's infamy is Jude 11, where we read of his greedy nature: "*The error of Balaam for reward.*" Even his good qualities are overwhelmed by the desire for fame, popularity and riches. In Josh. 13:22 he is called a soothsayer, which

means Balaam tried to influence his predictions as a prophet in view of personal financial gain.

Another interesting reference to this strange man is in 2 Pet. 2:16, where the saga of Balaam and his donkey is referred to. When a man is so weak a dumb animal has to straighten him out, we do not soon forget the matter! Notice these pulsating words: "*The dumb ass speaking with a man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.*" The love of money has caused a lot of misery through the centuries, and Balaam surely is proof of that premise: "*For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Tim. 6:10). When asked to place a curse upon the people of Israel, Balaam replied, "*If Balak would give me his house full of silver or gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God*" (Num. 22:18). That showed exactly what tempted Balaam—silver and gold.

The words of Jacob in Gen. 49:4 apply to Balaam very well, also: "*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*" James Grainger, in about the year 1750, must have been thinking of Balaam or his kinfolk, when he wrote, "What is fame? An empty bubbler, Gold? A transient, shining trouble.

The end result of compromising with King Balak and his conscience caused Balaam to ultimately hurt Israel deeply by teaching them to commit idolatry. These events brought about alienation from God due to immorality related to the worship of pagan deities (Num. 31). When we are wavering in our stand for truth, because popularity and financial security mean so much to us, our treasures are laid up in the wrong direction. That is when Satan has "a field day" and we make "*shipwreck of the faith*" (1 Tim. 1:19-20). The apostle Peter shows that some evil men "*make merchandise of you*" (2 Pet. 2:3), just as Balaam "*loved the hire of wrong-doing*" (2 Pet. 2:15).

In the "*New Bible Dictionary*" on page 129, in discussing what kind of a man Balaam really was, we have this precise statement, "A person may be a true prophet at one time and a miserable deceiver at another." That is what made Balaam so dangerous to the well-being of Israel. In Num. 25:1 and Num. 31:16, we learn that through the influence of Balaam, God's people committed whoredom with the Moabites. As a result of this trespass against the Creator, a great plague came upon the congregation of Israel. Centuries later, the Lord rebuked the church in Pergamos for "*holding to the teaching of Balaam*" (Rev. 2:14).

In Joshua's famous farewell address, that great man referred to the weakening impact upon Israel that Balaam had, and he urged the people of God to serve Jehovah in truth and sincerity (Josh. 24:14). Just

as Abel (Heb. 11:4), Balaam, dead for centuries, still speaks today. Here is the message that echoes through the years:

1. Be true to convictions based on God's truth
2. Never compromise your convictions
3. Do not allow money or fame to change you
4. Remember, morality and teaching go together
5. Never take the first step toward error
6. Love the Lord and purity above all else
7. Never forget the power of your influence.

Charles Erdman, a brilliant commentator, said of Balaam, "He feared God and worshipped gold." Balaam was, in many ways, "both a devil and a saint," as he tried to serve two masters. Desiring to "*die the death of the righteous*" (Num. 23:10), he conducted himself in such a way as to make that request an impossibility. May we learn valuable lessons from this brief study of a man who "*ran greedily after error.*"

Devotional Thought

WHEN IT'S BETTER TO FORGET

We sometimes forget those things we should remember, and treasure those things which need to be forgotten. Consider the following:

(1) **WE SHOULD FORGET PAST INJURIES.** If one sins against us and repents, we are obligated to forgive him (Luke 17:3). There is no good to be accomplished by continually dwelling on past injuries. If we carry an accumulation of past sins remembered, is that really forgiveness? In forgiving we must also forget (Heb. 8:12).

(2) **WE SHOULD FORGET PAST FAILURES** (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul would not dwell on his past. He had to forget it and press on to new heights. He had to forget his opposition to the church (Acts 26:9-11). He had to forget the fact that he once made havoc of the church and was personally involved in the persecution of many Christians (Acts 8:1-3). We cannot afford to live in the past, dragging ourselves down by mistakes that we have made. Our past failures should help us see what we were and what, by God's grace, we can become.

(3) **WE SHOULD FORGET PAST ACHIEVEMENTS.** This is so

that we will not become satisfied with what we once were, or what we now are. When we stop to applaud our past accomplishments, we are at a standstill for the present and likely to die in our steps. It is possible for one to hold closely to himself his attainments and never go beyond what he has. Others have paved the way for us by their steadfast and tireless service to Christ, but we cannot camp on it today and say our work is done. Former blessings will not suffice for the future. We, like Paul, must press on!

Talk To Yourself

W.A. HOLLEY

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Psalm 23 is a song without a peer. The writer talks to himself. Count the times David uses "I" "my," and "me." A strong affirmation of faith can work wonders! In the quietness of one's life the blessings of God can abide.

Man IS as he THINKS in his own heart (Proverbs 23:7). Paul, though in prison, suffering as only prisoners can, declared, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). David, though beset by Saul, "encouraged himself" (1 Samuel 30:6). It is possible for one to talk himself into a better state of mind. We shall note—

(1) When you are angry talk to yourself. Anger is one of the most destructive forces available to men and women. "Anybody can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power, and is not easy" (Aristotle). When angry, read Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil."

(2) When your child upsets you, stop and think how BEST to handle the problem. Talk to yourself. Don't make any rash remarks. Always keep control; be calm. Never abuse your children. Child-abuse can cause scars which will never vanish away. Ask yourself, What are you upset, disturbed, aggravated, about? Is it worth losing control? Time

is a great healer of problems.

(3) If the drinking of alcohol has become your problem, it is past time to talk to yourself. Drinking has never made a home better; where drinking is involved, there are more quarrels, more fusses, more fights; and more divorces. Drink debases and deludes its victims; it has no defense. A discovery that whiskey can be made from sawdust completes the ruin of the lush who drinks himself out of house and home: He now can drink the house! We now suggest that Proverbs 23:29-35 be carefully read. If you are addicted to alcohol, it is time to begin talking to yourself. You can do something about your problem if you but try. You are exhorted to avoid drink because of its final fatal, consequences.

(4) If you have fallen into the habit of fault-finding, it is time to talk seriously about this terrible sin. Jesus warned against such a problem (Matthew 7:1-4). Of course, we are commanded to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). It is always possible for one to be in "the objective case and in the kickative mood." There are those who seem to oppose anything and everything suggested by others. Of course, there are bad things, we freely admit; but why should we see nothing but the bad? Yes, there are bad apples in the barrel, but not all the apples are bad.

Some—women and men—who claim to be Christians, make a career of finding fault with the elders, the deacons, the song leaders, the Bible school teachers, et al; seldom do they find anything good to say about their fellow-Christians. Many of these critics do far more harm to the cause of Christ than they ever realize (Ephesians 4:31-32).

To illustrate: During the Vietnam War, a commander, when asked about a certain city, said, "The only way it could be saved was to destroy it." For shame!! Can it be that some think the only way the church of the Lord can be saved is to destroy it?? Christian, be a builder, not a wrecker! Talk to yourself.

(5) Should you develop a dark, negative attitude, talk to yourself. All improvement, both physical and spiritual, begins in the mind (Romans 12:1-2). "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). Look down and you see mud; look up and see the stars. This writer once went aboard a great plane during a storm; the plane took off and in a few minutes there appeared the brilliance of sunshine, leaving the storm far below. We may be troubled by sickness, pain, hardships, handicaps; but remember: these, too shall pass away! (Cf. John 14:1-6).

(6) Do you find it almost impossible to cooperate with others? Sometimes there are personality conflicts, but so with all men" (Romans 12:18), ". . . Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18). Don't turn people off. Use a little optimism, a little grace, a strong faith, and a sunny disposition to charm people. Henry Van Dyke said, "There is no personal charm so great as the charm of a cheerful temperament." Tell yourself to turn on the charm!! You can be workers together in good causes (I Corinthians 3:9; II Corinthians 6:1).

(7) Your marriage and entire family can be made better if you will but talk to yourself. Instead of talking about breaking up your home, talk about how to save it. Your family should live as a team, work as a team, attend worship services as a team, and it can survive almost any thing. Probably the most important factor that is causing a breakdown in the home today is lack of good examples. Fathers, mothers, only you can set good examples. The family united is the important factor. Families that fuss and fight, quarrel, and undermine each other, and refuse to be true to moral principles and marriage vows, are certain to fall apart (Ephesians 5:22-32; Hebrews 13:4; Mark 10:2-12).

The Six Most Needed Things

JACK GRAY

Several years ago our brother Gus Nichols was asked what he thought were the most critical needs of the brotherhood.

1. **CONVERSION OF THE MEMBERS.** The new birth consists of more than baptism. One has to be born of the Spirit and of water. Those of us who have been baptized must have been led to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Lord of life. So many Christians seem to take the casual approach to Christianity. Conversion is in reality a matter of surrender of one's life and commitment to Jesus as the Lord of ourselves.

2. **REGULAR ATTENDANCE.** Yes, it takes more than attendance to be a Christian, but there is no way one can be a Christian and develop the Christ-like life without regular worship and Bible study.

3. **SANCTIFICATION.** There must be a clear-cut distinction

between Christians and the world. The meshing of the church with the world is one of the great problems facing 20th-century Christianity.

4. **LIBERALITY.** The Lord's people are learning more and more about sacrifice and generosity. For the first time in our modern history, churches are planning big things in the name of the Lord. Million-dollar contributions. But it is not the special contributions that will make the church liberal in the long run. It is the commitment of regular, weekly, giving-as-prospered contributions that the church needs to develop liberality.

5. **UNITY.** Many congregations are marred by schism, faction, and disharmony. The church must believe the same thing, hope for the same thing, and work for the same goals. Programs must be so challenging that they require the unity of all to succeed.

6. **INFORMED LEADERSHIP.** Leaders must be first of all committed to what the Bible says. Leaders also need to know the people. They need to know how to lead and where to go. It is not so much "Who's-getting-to-run-the-church" as it is seeking to give pre-eminence to God.

Misuse Of Things Religious

MICHAEL D. GREENE

During the time of Samuel's tenure as a judge of Israel, the Israelites and the Philistines were engaged in fierce and mortal combat (I Samuel 4:1-2). The Israelites did not fare well during the battle, having lost 4,000 men. When the defeat was pondered by the elders of Israel, it was decided that the ark of the covenant be brought into the camp so that it "may save us out of the hand of our enemies." The results when the battle was resumed were no better; 30,000 Israelite soldiers were killed. To make matters worse, the ark of the covenant was also captured (II Samuel 4:4-11).

The Israelites were probably confused. Why had not the presence of the ark produced victory? They had failed to realize that it was not the presence of the ark alone that had produced victory previously, but the blessing of God upon their obedience (Exodus 23:20-33). They were using the ark of God as a talisman to ward off their enemies and were not obedient to God. They had misused the ark of the covenant. God had never intended for the ark to be a sign or a guarantee of military

victory. I wonder how often we are guilty of the misuse of things religious?

One thing that is surely misused today is the name Christian. The word was used in the scriptures to denote disciples, those who had obeyed the gospel (Acts 11:26; I Peter 4:16). It is a blessed name and one that should be respected—for it was secured at great cost! Yet, it is bandied about and used so indiscriminately it has lost its meaning for many. Not all that is called "Christian" today, whether schools, churches, or people, are so.

Other words that are misused are "miracle," "gospel music," "pastor" and "church." But perhaps the most abused is the name of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. To many, these are expletives, words used merely to fill out a sentence with no regard to their meaning or intended use. The Psalmist said "holy and reverend" is his name (Psalm 111:9). We should use the name of God and his Son only in the most respectful way possible, lest we use his name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

Then there are the functions of the church that are also misused. The church is not in the business of socialization, nor politics. Yet, in this day and time it is not unusual to see the resources of the church misused to advance every social and political cause that sashays down the pike. The function of the church is to evangelize the world and edify its members. True we are to be the light and salt of the world, but the means of effecting change in this world is the preaching of the gospel, and living the Christian life before others—not social reform and the political process.

The pulpit is also misused by many. It is not the place to air one's opinions, nor to engage in disputes, questions and strifes of words which produce envy, strife and suspicions (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Rather, it is the place to preach the word to the edification and saving of men's souls (II Timothy 3:13-4:5).

Finally, just as the ark was used as a talisman, so many today use all manner of religious symbols and icons in similar fashion. But no religious symbol, no matter the value of the materials from which it is made, can substitute for true obedience to the will of God. It did not work in Samuel's day; it won't work today.

All want the blessings and favor of Almighty God. The Israelites wanted it, as we do today. We should not expect him to bless us while we are not obeying his will, for God will not—and cannot—do that which is inconsistent with his will.

Let us take care that we do not misuse things religious.



“We Are All Going To The Same Place Only We Are Traveling Different Roads.”

BILL DEDMON

Many people have made the remark when engaged in a discussion about the church and the importance of being in the church. “Everybody is going to the same place but we are not going on the same road.” Generally speaking they will explain how you could go to different places by a number of different roads.

I used to reject the idea but now I must confess that the aforementioned statement is valid. We ARE all going to the same place but we are all traveling a different road. “As it is written, as I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11). Paul said, “. . . we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . .” (II Corinthians 5:10).

It is true that we are all going to the same place! Judgment! We will all go to the same place but we will not ALL stay in the same place; “before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another . . .” (Matthew 25:32). A person can travel any road he chooses, in fact the broad road is so broad that it will accomodate all philosophies of life and one following the broad road will arrive at the judgment. The narrow road is limited to only those things taught in God's word. We must obey the will of God and in so doing we will hear: “Well done, good and faithful servant . . .”

What About “The Temptation Of Christ”?

DAVID COURINGTON

A great amount of controversy has surrounded the movie, “The last Temptation Of Christ.” It has been reported that Jesus is portrayed as having lustful thoughts or dreams, among other things. Had he lusted after women in his heart, by his own teaching (see Matthew 5:28), he would have been guilty of sin. Such a portrayal is indeed blasphemous.

However, we need to know that Jesus was tempted in every form, but he never gave in. Let us see what the Bible has to say about Jesus' temptation.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is obvious that Jesus was tempted, but note the phrase, "yet without sin." He never gave in to the temptation to tell a lie to avoid troubles, nor to look at a woman to lust after her, nor do any other sinful thing.

Jesus was, according to this text, tested "in all points" like we are. He had feelings like we do and desires as you and I. He had to often let his desire to do the Father's will override his own appetites. He once told his disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28). So we can see that his temptations were not just a one-time thing, but rather continued during his whole lifetime.

We read of a specific time when Jesus was tempted of the Devil, in Matthew 4:1-11. The temptation here falls neatly into the categories that 1 John 2:16 gives, which are: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." First, Jesus was tempted to turn stones to bread. This was an appeal to a desire of the flesh. Jesus was hungry, for the text says that he had fasted for forty days, and afterward "hungered." Satan tends to tempt man at his weakest point, not his strongest. He tried to take advantage of Jesus' weakened physical condition to get him to give in to him. Jesus refused, saying: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It would have been easy for Jesus to have given in at this point; but he did not.

Then Satan tried to get Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to prove that the angels would really take care of him. The Devil even quoted a scripture here; but Jesus knew that Satan was using it for his own selfish interest. Jesus replied to this temptation to pride by saying, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Finally, Satan took Jesus upon a high mountain and showed him the kingdoms of the world, and told Jesus if he would just fall down and worship him, he would give him all of this. This was a temptation of the lust of the eyes. Jesus was equal to this test also, and replied: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Jesus never gave in to a single temptation, despite his weakened condition. In each instance Jesus used a scripture

to answer the Devil's test.

Aren't you thankful that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, yet never gave in, so that he might be our perfect Saviour. You and I should respond by seeking a way to escape our every temptation. I Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer (allow) you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Why One Should Attend Every Service Of The Church

BILLY WATKINS

The attitude of every Christian should be that of the writer of Psalm 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Worship is a great privilege and honor—not some difficult chore to be performed. If every Christian will prepare his heart, worship and Bible study will become great avenues of service for the worshiper.

There are several reasons a Christian should be at every service of the church. First, to glorify God; Paul said, "For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20). Since we belong to God, we are to glorify him and one means of doing this is by our worship. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23). When one willfully forsakes an assembly of the church, he forsakes an opportunity to glorify God.

Second, a Christian will attend every service of the church to set the proper example. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The example of every Christian is to draw men to the Lord. Willfully forsaking the services of the church does not draw, but repels. Jesus later said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). It is an offense, both to weak members and non-Christians, to forsake the services.

Third, a Christian will attend every service to help himself grow

spiritually. The Bible commands, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). Participating in worship is a means of growing. Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). To study from God's word, to sing praises, to pray, to partake of the Lord's Supper, and to give, strengthens a Christian each time he does these acts. There is always room for God's people to grow and to learn. Ignorance of the word of God is a curse to the church. God said "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). A good knowledge of the Word will help any Christian to grow, and a lack of it hinders growth.

Finally, a Christian will attend every service of the church because it is a good work, and a Christian desires to abound in good works. Paul said, "That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). To "maintain" something means to be consistent in it, and the Christian must be consistent in all good works which includes worship.

Worship is not all there is to Christian living, but it is a very important part.

What Is The Church Of Christ?

G.F. RAINES

In the second chapter of Acts of Apostles we read of the establishment of the church of Christ in the great city of Jerusalem upon the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Upon that day Peter preached remission of sins in the name of Christ in obedience to the great commission that our Lord had given to his apostles before his ascension into heaven (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).

Those who believed the gospel and obeyed it by repenting of their sins and being baptized in the name of Jesus were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:37-47). If you hear the same gospel today, believe it as the multitude of Jews did on that day of Pentecost and obey it as they obeyed it, the Lord will likewise add you to his church-the church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail (Mathew 16:18);

because "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

The church of Christ is composed of people who have done what the three thousand persons did on the day of Pentecost; and have consequently been added to the church to which they were added—the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18). As members of the body of Christ, we have organised congregations like the congregations that are called "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16) in the New Testament. We worship as the first-century Christians worshiped (John 4:24) and we engaged in the same work in which the first-century church engaged (Acts 6:1-6; Ephesians 4:14-16; I Timothy 3:15). The church of Christ of today is, therefore, not a denominational religious organisation; it is a reproduction of the church of which we read in the New Testament.

Foy E. Wallace has well said: "The wrong creed, the wrong doctrine, the wrong worship, the wrong organisation and the wrong name could not possibly result in the right church. But the right creed, the right doctrine, the right worship, the right organisation and the right name, for a like reason, cannot be the wrong church."

We solemnly urge you to investigate the church of Christ in your community in the light of the teaching of the Bible concerning the church that Jesus built.

The church of Christ refuses to be governed by human creeds and confessions of faith because:

1. They divide believers by enjoining tests of fellowship apart from the gospel of Christ.

2. They are unnecessary. By the holy Scriptures we are "thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16-17).

3. They are uninspired products of theological speculation.

Mr. James Alexander Haldane of Edinburgh, Scotland, has well said: "Man-made creeds of any nature, whether they be pronouncements of the Pope at Rome, the Augsburg Confession of the great Martin Luther, the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Westminster Confession of Faith of our own John Knox, serve no purpose except to bind men to the opinions of other men."

The gospel of Christ, for the following reason, is the only rule of faith and practice to which we adhere:

1. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18).
2. Christ is the only lawgiver (James 4:12).
3. By the knowledge of Christ our faith is established in the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 2:1-5).
4. Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18).
5. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).
6. All that we do is to be done in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17).
7. It is sinful to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (II John 9).

We should study the word of God daily because, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12). The Bereans "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).

The church of Christ in your vicinity cordially invites you to attend its services.

After Baptism What Am I To Do?

WENDELL WINKLER

(1) I AM TO WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE. Being "buried with him by baptism into death . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The man who has been born of God does not continually (commit) live that old life of sin characteristic of him before his conversion (I John 3:9; Romans 6:1, 2). Such obtains on the basis of his genuine repentance (II Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 6:1).

(2) I AM TO DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 1:22-23). This means I will read (I Timothy 4:13); study (II Timothy 2:15) and meditate upon (I Timothy 4:15) God's eternal Word.

(3) I AM TO BRING GLORY TO THE NAME OF CHRIST. Though I may suffer as a Christian, I am to glorify God in this name (I Peter 4:16). I am to never so live as to bring shame upon this high and holy

name. Alexander the Great conquered the world and wept because there was no more to conquer. But, he had a coward, with his name within his ranks. Alexander called this man unto his presence one day and sternly said, "You change your way of living or you change your name!" We wear the name of Christ (Christian). We should live worthily of it. Otherwise, let us not hypocritically thus be identified!

(4) **I AM TO CONTINUE STEADFASTLY.** Of those who were baptized on Pentecost it is written, "And they continued steadfastly . . ." (Acts 2:42). I am to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). I am not to be in and out, on and off, up and down, and hot and cold, spasmodic, irregular, hit and miss in the Lord's work. Inconsistent living will not get the job done.

(5) **I AM TO SEEK THOSE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE.** "If ye then be risen (referring back to having been risen from our burial with Christ in baptism, Colossians 2:12), with Christ seek those things which are above . . . set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). The Christian's interest and affections are not only to run horizontal but vertical! Our Father is in Heaven (Matthew 6:9). Our citizenship is in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Truly, then, we are to seek those things that are above, setting our affection on things above.

(6) **I AM TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT THE SAVIOUR.** Immediately upon his conversion Paul shared Christ with others (Acts 9:20). Upon finding Christ, Andrew and Philip told Peter and Nathaniel (John 1:40-51). We have been won to win, saved to save, converted to convert, disciplined to disciple. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2).

In Season

JOHN GIPSON

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

"Autumn to winter, winter into spring, summer into fall-so rolls the changing year," said D.M. Mulock. We know the order, and we have accepted it. But suppose for a moment that every year it was different.

What would happen if winter followed spring or spring followed fall? And everything was turned topsy turvy again the following year? What chaos would prevail! Who would know when to plant, or whether he could even expect to reap?

How do you account for the regularity of the seasons? The answer is found in a promise that God made to man. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." God said it and we believe it.

Yes, I have heard it said that the time is coming when you will not be able to tell summer from winter, or spring from fall, but I don't believe it. For that to be true God would have to break His promise. You can mark it down. We will always have our seasons—as long as the earth remains.

But did you notice the phrase, "While the earth remains"? There's a warning in that. This earth, which looks so permanent, is not going to be here always. "The heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" (II Peter 3:10). One day it will be the "late, great planet earth."

But back to our text. God has kept his word, been so faithful to his word that even unbelievers have come to accept it as "law." We all look for the sun to come up in the morning, and the leaves to fall in autumn. We plant in the spring and wait. We trust the seasons and act in faith. What if someone said, "I don't believe fall will come this year. I believe it will always be summer?" Just mark it down; he will be the loser for his lack of faith. Whether he believes or not, it's going to be.

God is faithful. You can trust His word about the seasons . . . OR ANYTHING ELSE!