

THE BIBLE TEACHER


Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity.

Vol. 19

May 1988

No. 1

EDITORIAL



Why Should One Become A Christian?

When Jesus walked on earth there were many people who became interested in Him and wanted to follow Him, but they were not ready to pay the cost of discipleship. Many came to Him just to watch Him perform great miracles. In John chapter 6 we read, a great multitude of people followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. This was a great crowd of more than five thousand people. Knowing that they were following Him for several hours, Christ wanted to feed them. But there was no Provision. This gave Him another opportunity of performing another miracle in their midst. From a lad, he took five barley loaves and two fish and gave thanks to the Father, and then gave that food to His disciples for distribution to the people. They all ate, and there were twelve baskets of fragments gathered. Everyone of them was greatly impressed and said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." After this everyone went to his destination. But the next day the same crowd was again looking for Jesus: and when they found him, they asked, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Instead of answering their question, Christ told them, assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which

endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:27). Notice, they were seeking Jesus, but their motive of seeking him was wrong. They were seeking Him for more food.

I remember, a man approached me a few years ago and said that he wanted to become a Christian. I told him what he should do to become a Christian, that is, he should believe in Christ with all his heart and repent of all of his sins and confess Jesus the Son of God and then be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. I also told him that that would be just a beginning of the Christian life for him and that he would be required to live the Christian life every day. I also told him that it would be necessary for him to attend the worship services of the church as a Christian. After studying with him from the Bible for several hours, he said, "Brother, I have understood everything, I believe in Jesus Christ, I want to become a Christian, and now I want to be baptized." So I took him and baptized him. After that I didn't see him for several weeks. Then suddenly he came on a Sunday morning and attended the worship Service. After the service was over, I asked him where he was. He told me, since he was a travelling businessman therefore he has to go to different places concerning his business, and that whenever he would be in Delhi then he would certainly come and worship with us. Then he wanted me to issue him a baptismal certificate. He said, since I come from hindu background people don't believe me that now I have become a Christian, so if I would issue him a certificate stating that he was baptized and became a Christian, then he would be accepted as such wherever he goes. To make the long story short, I wrote a baptismal certificate for him and gave him. Again, I didn't see him for several weeks. Then one day I received a summon from the lawcourt where I was called upon to appear as a witness. There in the court I met with the same man, I had baptized, before the magistrate, he had produced there the certificate of baptism to prove to the court that he became a Christian and therefore he should get divorce from his wife. He deceived me, but certainly he will have to give answer to the Lord one day, because the Lord knows the heart and motives of people.

There are such cases where people have become members of some church or denomination just because their children would get admission and free education in the school run by that particular denomination. I know of people who have gone through some acts just to show that they have become Christians, but the real motive was marriage. To get married to a Christian they became Christian. The real motive was not salvation or the eternal life in heaven, but marriage. Such people need to know that they can fool men but not God.

Why are you a Christian, if you are one? Why should you become a Christian, if you are thinking of becoming one? Freedom from sin and the eternal life with Jesus in heaven should be the motive for one to become a Christian. Christ came in the world to give salvation from sin and we need to become his follower to be saved from sin. That alone should be the motive of one for becoming a Christian. After warning His disciples about the great price one has to pay in following Him, Christ said, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what advantage is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (Luke 9:24, 25). Christ is the only way to heaven. Without him man is lost. Sin causes man to be lost in hell forever. Christ saves man from sin and gives the hope of eternal life in heaven.

Who Wants To Go To Heaven, Anyway?

J. C. Choate

Many people believe in heaven and talk about heaven. The various religions advocate the idea of a future life. Often times in the local newspapers, regardless of the religious background of the deceased, it will usually be announced that he has now gone to his heavenly abode.

The Bible tells us a lot about heaven. Even before the creation of the world, God, Christ, His Spirit, and the holy angel band dwelt there. Eventually God sent Jesus to this earth to live among men, and to die upon the cross for the sins of the world, in order that man might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. After the Lord's death, burial and resurrection, he returned to the Father in heaven and there he remains to this day.

One day Christ will come again. He will come to receive his bride the church, to judge the world according to his word. to cast the wicked into eternal torment, and to take the righteous to heaven where they shall live with him forevermore. While Christ was still in the world, he said to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3).

Who can go to heaven? According to the scriptures, only the righteous, the faithful children of God, those who are in Christ and in his church. The unbeliever, wicked, ungodly, and even unfaithful children of God cannot go there. All of this will be settled at the judgment when the Lord shall separate the godly from the ungodly as the shepherd separate the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Throughout the scriptures there are many references to heaven. As recorded in the book of Revelation, the apostle John was permitted to have a brief glimpse of it so that he might write about it, but even then he could not really tell what he saw. The best he could do was to describe it in symbolic language that human beings could understand to a small degree. For example, he spoke of heaven as being a beautiful city, with streets of gold and with walls of precious stones. Among other things, he wrote, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he will be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Revelation 21:1-8).

Living in a world full of sin, wickedness, and ungodliness, and a world full of problems, troubles, and sorrows, you would think that every one would want to go to that beautiful and wonderful place called heaven. Especially should we desire to go there since none of those worldly things will be there but it will be a place where we can have peace and happiness and where we can live for all eternity. The apostle Paul wanted to go to heaven, but he felt also that he was needed in this world. He said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." (Philippians 1:21-24).

I am afraid that many people say they want to go to heaven, and they talk about going to heaven, but few really live like they are planning to go there. Looking at the way they are living, you would think that most people are planning to live in this world forever. Little thought is given to God, obeying him, and being faithful to him. One's job, family, school, house, food, TV, videos, and material things in general, seem to be what most

people are thinking about. And yet, death is all around us and life is short, at best. As for material things, the Lord admonished us with these words: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21).

The apostle Paul reminded us of what is important in life. He said "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Timothy 6:7-11).

My friend, do you want to go to heaven? If so, you need to begin to think about what God wants you to do. This means that you need to read and study the Bible to learn what the Lord would have you to do to be saved. When you do that, he will add you to his church, his spiritual family, and give you the hope of eternal life. If you will then remain faithful to him, worshipping him each first day of the week, living a pure and godly life, and putting him first in your life in all that you say and do, then when you die you'll be prepared to go to heaven. No, that is not asking too much of you. Actually, as you live for the Lord, according to his teaching, you will have a better, richer, and fuller life even here on earth. Try it and you will find that it is true.

And what about your family? Do you want them to go to heaven? If so, then you had better set a good example and do all you can to help them prepare to go there. Study God's word

daily with them and go to the trouble to bring them to worship regularly. Be thinking ahead, now, of future Christian mates for your sons and daughters and be teaching others so they may become Christians, bringing their children into God's family for development of Christian homes of the future generations. All of this will also help your family to be saved and to go to heaven.

The apostle Paul said, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that loved him." (1 Corinthians 2:9). My friend, if you gain heaven then you will have gained everything, and yet if you miss heaven then you will have missed it all. The Lord has prepared a mansion in heaven for you. He invites you and pleads with you to prepare yourself to live in that mansion for all eternity. Remember that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. In what better way could you spend your life in this world and in the world to come?

God's Great Book

Roy Beasley

Let's talk about the Bible—"God's Great Book." The word Bible means "The Book." This denotes its superiority and importance. It is *the* book—the book of books. It is worth more to mankind than all other books combined. It is the treasure for the poor, a solace for the sick, food for the hungry, a guide for the lost, and hope for the dying. It is the basis of Christian religion.

Actually, this great book does not call itself the Bible or the Holy Bible. That is the name that man has given to it. It refers to itself as "the word of God" (Heb. 4: 12), "the Scriptures" (Jn. 5:39), "the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

This book is unlike any other book. It is "the word of God." It is given by inspiration through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Men wrote as they were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit so that we can be certain that we do have the true word of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The Bible is in reality a great library. It is not just one book but a collection of 66 books written by approximately 40 different writers over a period of 1600 years. The Bible is divided into two grand divisions—the Old and New Testaments. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. The first five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—are books of law written by inspiration by Moses, the great lawgiver. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are books of history—a history of the children of Israel from the time they entered into the promised land. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon are books of poetry. The rest of the Old testament are books of prophecy. In these books from Isaiah to Malachi, we find numerous prophecies of the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom, the church.

The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell of the life of Christ. The reason for the writing of these books may be found in the words of John 20:30, 31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." Next we have a book of history—Acts of Apostles. This book tells of the establishment and the growth of the Lord's church during a part of the first century A.D. This is a thrilling story that you should be sure to read. It tells of the work of the apostles as they go about carrying out the command of Jesus to "go into all the world and preach the gospel." After this we come to the 21 letters or epistles. These were written to

Christians—some to individuals, some to congregations. 14 were written by the apostle Paul. James wrote one, Peter wrote two, John wrote three, and Jude wrote one. These were written to inform the Christian how to live the Christian life. One book—Acts—tells the sinner what to do to be saved, but there are 21 books that tell the saved how to keep saved. Finally, there is the book of Revelation, the only book of prophecy in the New Testament. Most of it is written in strange symbolic language—a kind of a code. It was a message of encouragement in the time of persecution telling of the final victory of Christ and his church over the Devil and his followers. It also gives us a preview of how beautiful heaven must be.

The Bible is the most priceless possession that we will ever have in this life. Let us study it carefully, prayerfully, and with an obedient heart.

An Elder Must Be Of Good Behaviour

Bob Duncan

“A bishop then must be . . . of good behaviour . . .” (I Timothy 3:2). The Greek word used here is *kosmios*, and is translated “orderly” in the American Standard Version. This same word is translated “modest” in I Timothy 2:9, and in the same verse the verb form of the word is translated “adorn.”

The following comments are from Albert Barnes' *Notes on the New Testament*: “Coverdale renders it, *mannerly*. The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of language, would be, that he should be a *gentleman*. He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners. He should not do violence to the usages of refined intercourse, nor be unfit to appear respectable in the most refined circles of society.” He further adds: “other things being equal, the refined, courteous, polite gentleman...will always do more good than he, who neglects the rules of good breeding.”

With the idea that an elder should not be rude, rough, and boorish we could not be more in agreement, but we believe there is more in the word than that. R.C.H. Lenski has written the following in his commentary: "This has been regarded rather superficially when it is taken to mean 'the refined, courteous, polite gentleman . . . of good breeding.' Is this word ever used thus? The Greek calls the gentleman *kalos* not *kosmios*. Like the two preceding adjectives, this one also denotes a quality of mind and character which will then naturally manifest itself in the life."

Thayer defines the word here translated "of good behavior" as meaning, "well-arranged, seemly, modest. Of a man living with decorum. A well ordered life." R. Finlayson, commenting in *Pulpit Commentary*, says the elder "must have a love for good rules." Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says, "The concept always contains the idea of control of the body and its movements and impulses" Kittel also uses *order, adornment, self-controlled, disciplined well mannered, and honourable* in his discussion of *kosmios*.

The characteristic we are here considering will manifest itself in every area of a man's life, and will also be seen in the balance obtaining between the various areas of his life. The well ordered life will be a life with priorities properly arranged, and with attention's being given to different aspects of one's life and work in proportion to the importance of each aspect.

The one who is "of good behaviour" is one who conducts himself in an orderly and well mannered fashion in connection with the affairs of the church. One around whom a great deal of contention and strife always seems to generate likely would not make a good elder. One whose rudeness stirs up hard feelings, and causes a congregation to be needlessly in an uproar is not "of good behaviour." There are those who have hearts of gold, and who are ever so dedicated to that which is right, but who simply do not know how to behave themselves in a way that will promote the general well-being of a congregation of the saints. There is such a thing as standing for the right, but doing it in the wrong way.

One must be "of good behaviour" in his day to day relationships to become an elder. Those with whom he work or does business, those who live in his neighborhood, those who are associated with him in recreational, community, or civic activities all should reconize in him one who is mannerly, disciplined, and courteous. A congregation overseen by those who are otherwise simply will not have the respect of the people in the community.

While the family relationships of an elder are to be discussed later, it is in order to mention here, in connection with this particular qualification, that one must be "of good behaviour" in the home to be appointed to the eldership. Nothing can destroy respect for a man more quickly and thoroughly than a lack of respect on the part of the members of his own family. As the leader of his own household, he should conduct himself in an orderly and affable manner. His practice of self-control, his balanced life, his good judgment—all these should command the confidence and respect of every family member so that each one is happy to follow his leadership.

It needs to be mentioned also that the real test of one's behavior or orderliness is in his reaction to stress or difficulty. It is easy for most of us to conduct ourselves in an orderly and respectable manner so long as everything is going well with us. But when we are provoked, or when someone has been rude to us, or when the crisis comes—these will separate those who are qualified for the eldership on this particular point from those who are not.

Let no one think "of good behavior" suggests a tolerant, easygoing, acquiescent, or docile disposition. All Christians must stand for that which is right and against that which is wrong. Those who do so will find themselves in conflict with the world and, at times, even with some who are members of the church. But the Christian can still conduct himself in an orderly fashion. Jesus did not yield or bend when tempted by the devil (Matthew 4), but he conducted himself with dignity and order.

One who cannot order his own behavior with disciplined self-control and dignity should never be appointed to the eldership.

Is It Scriptural ?

R. W. Gray

The divine injunction is, "Wherefore if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . ." (I Peter 4:11). The inspired warning has it, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God..." (II John 9) David came to realize that God had made a breach upon his people when they would have fetched the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, because they failed to seek him "after the due order" (I Chronicles 15:13).

It has ever been incumbent upon man to act in harmony with the revealed word of God in all matters religious. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Our ways are not God's ways, nor our thoughts his thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). But God has expressed his thoughts and revealed his ways through the word of the inspired penman (I Corinthians 2:9-13). In the absence of a "thus saith the Lord God." man is without authority to speak or act in the cause of the Lord (Isaiah 7:7).

It is not the design of this article to discuss the method of how we may establish Bible authority, although this is an essential element in seeking the Lord after the due order, but to lament the dearth of an appeal to the scriptures as our sole authority for every teaching and practice. Nor is it our purpose to resurrect the spirit that used the phrase, "is it scriptural," as an excuse to object to matters authorized under generic authority, but not delineated as to the manner of execution. This was properly labeled an "anti" attitude. Men wrecked churches across the land with this unwholesome, if not unholy, approach to the question of scriptural authority.

Time was that much of the discussion of any proposed work or activity within the churches of Christ centered around the matter of it's scripturalness. This was, in fact, the first consideration. If the proposed project did not pass this criteria it was

abandoned. Issues were debated in our lectureships. Visiting evangelists examined proposed or current innovations in the "light of the Bible." When our preachers were together, whether in a casual meeting or a planned preacher's luncheon, the major thrust of their discussions had to do with the soundness or scripturalness of the latest fad among us.

Borrowing a phrase from a denominational manual we observe that "now it is different." Elders hear of an activity employed by others that is getting results. They discuss the feasibility of inaugurating the program in the local congregation. Considered is whether we have the personnel needed to perform the work, the prospects of success, the financial cost, and the way it will be received by our people. If one raises the question as to whether it squares with scriptural principles he is met with a cold stare, as if his fellow saints had heard the voice of a corpse. This may exaggerate the case a little, but very little.

Many factors combine to produce this sad state of affairs, but we fear that the greatest single problem is lack of respect for the Bible as the inspired, inerrant word of God. Men and women who know that God seeks to direct their path solely through the medium of his revealed will surely see the need to find a thus saith the Lord in all they do. How long has it been, brother, since you heard someone say, "Is it scriptural?" Think on these things.

What Is The Preacher's Job?

Phillip Gray

I suppose almost everyone regardless of his economic, educational or religious background, has a notion of some kind of what the word "preacher" means. Most would easily define it as, "one who preaches," and that would be absolutely correct. But, there is often a great deal of uncertainty among people, even religious people—even preachers themselves—about

what the preacher ought to preach. In his preaching, what is the most important message to be declared, and what approach (or methods) should be followed? Fortunately, the same questions were around in the day of the apostles, and Paul provided the inspired answer. This he did in II Timothy 4:1-5. The following is a brief analysis of the passage using the English Bible and Vincent's WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, Vol. 4, pp. 318-322:

(1) "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) Preach the word, be instant (or, 'be ready; stand by, be at hand, be present') in season (when it is convenient), out of season (when it is inconvenient. 'Timothy is... to discharge his duty to those with whom he deals, whether it be welcome or not. '); reprove ('Rather, *convict* of their errors. '), rebuke ('The word implies a *sharp severe* rebuke, with, possibly, a suggestion in some cases of impending penalty...'), exhort ('to exhort' is 'to incite by argument or advice: urge strongly: to give warnings or advice: make urgent appeals, according to WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY) with all longsuffering (patience) and doctrine (teaching; 'The combination is suggestive. Longsuffering is to be maintained against the temptations to anger presented by the obstinacy and perverseness of certain hearers; and such are to be met not merely with rebuke, but also with sound and reasonable instruction in the truth'). (3) For the time will come when they will not endure ('put up with' NIV) sound doctrine ('Or *healthful teaching*'); but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ('Or, *being tickled in their hearing...Seneca says: Some come to hear, not to learn, just as we go to the theatre, for pleasure, to delight our ears with the speaking or the voice or the plays*'); (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables ('More correctly, *will turn aside.*' For 'fables' the NIV has 'myths'). (5) But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions (suffer hardships), do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

Therefore, to summarize Paul's answer to our question, a

preacher is one who preaches the word, when it is convenient and when it is not. It often is not when his listeners do not want to hear it. His method (or approach) in preaching is to convict men of their wrongs, sharply and severely rebuking those in error, and making urgent appeals for all to do right. Is it not sad that the time has come when many will not endure, or put up with the healthful teaching of the Bible, but will listen only to that which tickles their ears and is pleasing? However, the preacher is to discharge his duty to those with whom he deals, whether it be welcome or not.

The Strength Of The Church

Raymond Elliott

The true strength of a congregation is not found in the large number of people on the roll, the amount of money in the treasury, the host of prominent citizens found among the membership nor the beautiful and expensive building which might be owned by the local church. Such could be in evidence because of a strong, spiritual group of saints but would not necessarily and always be true. You can read the history of the early church and learn that this statement is accurate. The kingdom of God is manifested in such qualities as "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." While we sometimes pride ourselves in the fact that our attendance has increased and our contribution is at an all time high, we must understand that true strength is to be measured in the matters pertaining to the spiritual development in the individual Christian.

Such growth is not necessarily reported in our brotherhood papers as progress reports. For example, a Christian lady related to me that if she worked two days in a week, one day's salary would be given to the Lord. That's just wonderful! A brother told me once that he had the chance to have his overseer fired because of personal difference, but didn't, since the man would not have support for his family. That is growth, because prior

to this brother's conversion to the Lord, the two men had actually fought. You witness a sister who at one time neglected the worship now attending faithfully because of her love for the Lord—that's growth. You notice the increased interest in Bible study in a brother and hear him talking to others about the need of obeying Christ—thats' growth. A brother forgives another of personal injury—that's growth. A husband and wife who once fought and fussed all the time now live in peace and harmony, rearing their children in the way of the Lord—that's growth.

It is a beautiful thing to see people growing in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I ask you in a personal way, are you stronger today than you were a year ago?

Mothers Are So Precious

Earlene Rose

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies —Proverbs 31:10.

Mothers are so precious, and memories are so dear;
We feel a touch of heaven whenever they are near.
A mother's kiss that heals the smallest little pain
Can also mend a heart, and help it love again.

The understanding touch of mother's warm embrace
Assures us she has traveled along the very place
Upon the road of life where we must walk today,
And from her wisdom gleaned, she gently guides our way.
In everything we do; in every joy we share;
In every battle triumphed; in every cross we bear;
A mother's love goes with us; her presence ever near.
Yes, mothers are so precious, and memories are so dear.

Attributes of God

John Waddey

God is! The heavens declare his glory (Psalm 19:1). So evident is his existence that there is no excuse for atheism or idolatry (Romans 1:19-20). Only a fool denies the existence of a supreme being (Psalm 14:1). Nature's revelation of God can only tell of his powers and wisdom; to serve him properly and to worship him with understanding, we must know more about God. Through the Holy Scriptures, God has revealed himself to humanity. To that record we now look to learn what God is like.

"The Lord our God is *one God*" (Deuteronomy 6 : 4). Our God is one in contrast to the myriads of gods of paganism. Our God is the one universal God. Israel's neighbours each had a god for their locale. There is but one seat of divine government in the universe. No creature, force or power in the cosmos possesses the nature and attributes of our God Jehovah.

God is manifested in three persons : Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At his baptism, Jesus stood on Jordan's banks, the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven (Matthew 3 : 16-17). We read of "God the Father" (Galatians 1 : 3), God the Son (Hebrews 1 : 8), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5 : 3, 4). This plurality is reflected in Creation when "God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image . . ." (Genesis 1 : 26). In Revelation 4 : 1-5 : 7 we see the Father on the throne of heaven, Christ the Lamb and the Holy Spirit with seven fold power before the throne. Ours is the triune God.

"God is a *Spirit*" (John 4 : 24). "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," said Christ (Luke 24 : 39). Thus our God is not made of flesh, nor is he temporal or subject to the limitations of a corporeal frame. Being spirit, God is invisible to mortal eyes (I Timothy 1 : 17).

Jehovah God is *omnipotent* i.e., all powerful. He asked Abraham, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah ?" (Genesis 18 : 14).

He is "God the Almighty" (Revelation 4 : 8). Only an omnipotent being could create the universe by the word of his mouth (Psalm 33 : 6). Likewise, only he could destroy it (II Peter :3 7-12). His name *Jehovah* speaks of his power. Only he is the *self-existing one*. God alone is totally independent in his existence.

Our God is *omniscient*; he knows everything. All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4 : 13). "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15 : 18 KJV). The hundreds of fulfilled prophecies demonstrate the super-natural knowledge of God who declares "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done . . ." (Isaiah 46 : 10). Truly he is the all-seeing God; nothing is hidden from his sight (Psalm 69 : 5).

The Lord God is *omnipresent*. Solomon said, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth ? behold the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee . . ." (I Kings 8 : 27). "Am I God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off ? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him! . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 23 : 23-24). Because he is present everywhere, he can be with each disciple, wherever he be, to the end of the world (Matthew 28 : 20). Any sinner seeking after God can find him, since "he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17 : 27). It is impossible to hide from God. We can only submit to him or be punished (Psalm 139 : 7-13).

Jehovah is *eternal* in existence. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psalm 20:2). Because he is "eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God [we owe him] honor and glory (I Timothy 1:17).

God is *unchangeable*. "With whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17). He is "the same, yesterday and today, yea and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Men may be changeable and fickle, but our God is totally dependable.

Our Lord is perfect in *holiness*. "Holy holy, holy is Jehovah . . ." (Isaiah 6:3). No sin or sinner can stand in his presence (Isaiah 6:1-7) His "word is very pure" (Psalm 119:140). "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17 KJV). A holy God demands—requires—holy living in his people (II Corinthians 7:1), and holiness in worship and services (Psalm 29:2 KJV).

The great Jehovah is *omnibenevolent* or infinite in goodness. "Jehovah is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm 145:9). Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the heavenly Father (James 1:17). He works all things together for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28). "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man" (James 1:13).

Our God is infinitely *just*. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne" (Psalm 89:14). Abraham affirmed "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Genesis 28:25). Since all must stand before him in judgment to receive their eternal rewards or punishments, it is comforting to know that he will not judge according to appearance, but will judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

The Lord is *merciful to save* his people. He "is not willing" that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). His great love and kindness were demonstrated in the giving of his only begotten Son as a sacrificial offering for the salvation of a lost race (John 3:16). Accepting his own Son's death in lieu of our's, He now extends generous pardon on simple terms, easily met by any man (Mark 16:15-16). To insure that no one would misunderstand the terms of forgiveness, He recorded it in the Sacred Volume and has preserved it to this day. That word is able to save our souls (James 1:21). He pleads with all men to come and freely accept the gift of salvation. Was ever such love found in mortal man? Only God

could love us and let his Son die for us when we were weak, ungodly sinners and enemies (Romans 5:6-10).

Oh, what a mighty and wonderful God we have. Let us love and serve him all our days.

Real Darkness

Jerry L. Fausz

Several years ago this writer was invited to visit and tour an underground mining operation. It sounded interesting and so the invitation was accepted. Distance to the working area was about 2100 feet straight down. Our trip was begun after getting into all the miner's paraphernalia. Travel time was 19 seconds by a large elevator. It was not at all like the mines seen in movies, and much more than anticipated. Impressive and very dirty best describes the first thought. Very little is done by the old pick and shovel. But the actual mining or digging is carried out by a machine called—you may have guessed—the miner. Exposed body surfaces begin to blacken from the coal dust after only a few hours. Your's truly would be down only two hours. Every worker has a specific job to perform. Without the proper equipment the operation would shut down. Safety is a major consideration. Every job involves danger. But the foreman explained that bolting the ceiling was perhaps the most dangerous. There were many things within the mining operation to impress the beholder. However, there was one matter impressive than anything else—when the lights were turned off. Nothing could be seen. Not even your hand held in front of your face. Light to the slightest degree did not exist. It was a darkness unknown before this day. "Now that's real darkness," was the only comment made.

Darkness is something that nobody is particularly fond of. There is a certain unexplainable fear it brings on. Light sustains life, and God provides the light. This is true in both the physical

life as well as the spiritual life (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 119:105). While the plague of darkness was over the land of Egypt, God gave light to the Israelites (Exodus 10:21-23). It is written, "...even darkness which could be felt," God provided light during the departure from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 13:22). It was also provided in the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15-20). But it was darkness and destruction for the Egyptians. God's mercy and loving care was manifested in many ways. But his guiding light either by pillar of fire and/or by his word is most impressive.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the true light (John 1:7-9). Egyptian bondage and deliverance as well as the light were all types, and a shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5). We must study and learn from the Old Testament because all scripture is inspired of God (Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16-17). However, if one is to walk in the light, his authority is the New Testament for which Jesus Christ died (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 9:15-17). Christ fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). Therefore one must be in Christ to receive benefit from the true light. Many still prefer darkness (John 1:11). The antitype of Egyptian bondage is the bondage of sin, which is also real darkness. Faith, repentance, confessing Christ and baptism all represent the response of a good and honest heart to the light which the Bible, the word of God provides (Psalm 119:105).

Deliverance is also possible. The antitype of crossing the Red Sea is baptism, and walking in newness of life (I Corinthians 10:1; Romans 6:3-4). But many stop short and refuse baptism or deliverance from the bondage of sin (Acts 22:16). Destruction is eminent just as sure as the Egyptians were destroyed; New Testament baptism represents a burial at which time one's sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. This places one in Christ, and in him there is no darkness (I John 1:5). All spiritual blessings to include heaven are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Baptism or immersion in water represents the only entrance to the kingdom or church which Jesus Christ died for and purchased with his precious blood (Matthew 16:16-19; Acts 2:38,

47; 20:28; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12). It is not possible to love Jesus Christ, and come out of darkness without obeying (John 14:15; I John 1:6). The accountable individual is reminded that there is only one body (church), and that baptism is just as important as your eternal destiny is (Ephesians 4:4-5; I Peter 3:21).

Individual resurrection is also necessary (Colossians 2:12). This involves walking in newness of life or in the light (Romans 6:4; I John 1:7-9). Some are baptized merely to get wet or become wet sinners. There was no death, burial, and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16; 6:3-4). Worshiping God in spirit and in truth is commanded, and required of all Christians (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25). Attending all the services appointed by the elders is also necessary (Hebrews 13:17). But walking in the light after becoming a new creature includes much more (II Corinthians 5:17). It involves picking up one's cross daily, and existing as a living sacrifice for Christ (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2). Jesus paid the price and offers so much with so little demanded.

God help us to accept in faith and obedience the true light through the written word of God (John 12:48; James 1:21). Failure to recognize and accept these truths is to remain in *REAL DARKNESS*, and destruction is imminent.

Somebody's Little Girl

Bobby Key

I have just returned from the hospital where I visited a young woman. Old beyond her years, she has experienced six pregnancies with only one living child, her frail body is so ravaged with disease, she has undergone serious surgery. At the tender age of eighteen she has experienced more of what the world has to offer than most do in a lifetime. Suffering from gonorrhoea and other complications she will not live through the week. She has all but been deserted by her family and friends, and she has never

been married. Life is empty and meaningless to this unfortunate child of our times.

Could this be your little girl? Parents, we have an awesome responsibility! In cooperation with God, we brought a life into the world that never existed before; but now that it does exist, it will never cease to exist. Whether our child's eternal destiny is heaven or hell depends largely upon us. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:5). An unfaithful Christian mother said, "I brought my child into the world and that ends my responsibility. It is no concern of mine what he does with his life, it is up to him if he wants to attend church or become a Christian." This is the attitude of too many parents.

No parent intends for his child to come to such an end as the girl I described. Yet, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). Two things contributed to this girl's downfall: lack of parental restraint and bad company. Sin promises much, but there are millions of hopeless, hapless, helpless individuals languishing upon beds of affliction as a living testimony that as we sow we must also reap (Gal. 6:7). After a night of sin, there is a day of regret and gloom; and after a lifetime of sowing to the flesh, there is an eternal night of endless darkness. Unless parents begin to take more interest in their children, this story will be repeated many times over.

Mothers must share the blame for children's going bad. Call the roll of sons of great men, and for the most part, you will get but sorry responses unless the mothers are found worthy. The molding influence of the mother is traceable in the lives of the majority of faithful men and women serving the Lord today. A good mother is worth a hundred preachers in the influence of that mother's child. Mothers, in this fight of God and right, so much depends on you.

A child has the power to become. When a boy thrusts his hand in yours, you never know what to expect. It may be smeared from his latest sandwich or moist from the tadpoles and wiggletails he has just caught, but whatever its condition,

Remember that it is the hand of the future! Someday this hand may hold a Bible from a pulpit, or a revolver from a dark alley. It may be the skilled hand of a surgeon, or the cunning hand of a gambler. It may be steady and true as it moves the controls of some scientific instrument, or shake uncontrollably as it grasps a bottle. Thank God that hand is now yours to hold and to guide!

Many years ago a rough boy attended a Sunday School and made it tough for every teacher he had. Finally he was led to the door and told not to come back. He didn't come back but rather began a life of crime and bloodshed that perhaps is unequalled in modern times. Finally, before a theatre entrance in Chicago one evening his body was riddled with bullets. In one of Chicago's papers a most unusual picture appeared—only the feet of the dead desperado showed. The caption under the picture was brief: "These are the feet of John Dillinger!" The editorial comment was heartsearching: "Who knows where these feet might have gone if someone had guided them aright...?" What a terrible price to pay for neglect.

A young boy came to his father and said, "Dad if you don't do something to help me I am going to commit suicide." The busy father was stunned to know that anything was wrong. The boy went on to tell his father of his ventures into sin and the contracting of a dreaded social disease. The father sent him to an institution for treatment. Believed to be cured, he was sent home and married a pure, beautiful, young girl who soon gave birth to a son. The mother died in child birth, and the baby was deficient both physically and mentally because of his father's diseased body. Whatever a boy sows in his younger years, he may expect to reap in his later years. A few weeks passed and in desperation the young father picked up a revolver, went outside and took his own life.

The baby lived. He stood in a long line of people in Buffalo, New York, waiting to shake the hand of the President of the United States, William McKinley. As he grasped the hand of the President, he drew a gun and took the life of McKinley. Not long afterward, he was brought to justice and was executed. This

gnim octopus of tragedy had tentacles that reached into the lives of many people; it started; with the failure and the neglect of parents who were too busy making a living to guide a son in the way he should have gone.

P.S. I have received word that the girl I visited in the hospital has died. She was somebody's little girl.

The Uniqueness of Christ

Steve Williams

The critics of Christ have assailed his uniqueness by pointing to the numerous parallels between his teaching and similar statements among the rabbis. It is true that most of what Christ said can be paralleled from rabbinic sources or the Old Testament. From that vantage point there is little that is unique in Christ's doctrine. There is another way of judging uniqueness however.

One historian speaks of a similar situation in the discipline of history. He says there is no democracy among historical facts. While all historical facts may be true, they are not all of equal importance and significance. The historian who makes all ancient facts of equal significance never understands the flow of history, of movements among men. He never knows why things happened. It has been said that a genius is a person who has the instinct for knowing which fact has meaning. Out of a maze of information, the genius can find a pattern, a cause, and an effect.

The teaching of Christ is full of religious genius and uniqueness if examined from such a vantage point. Jesus knew the right thing to say at the right time. He could speak pointedly to the problems and issues at hand. He could uncover a fatal flaw in a person's character and offer a solution in a single paragraph (Jn. 3, 4). He wasted no time in trivial nonsense, but offered real solutions to sweeping problems in a single sentence (Mt. 6:33). The most difficult of questions designed to entrap a person could be resolved by Jesus with such ease that everyone was left with their mouth open, gasping for a response (Mt. 22:21). Christ's

teaching appeals to the best in mankind to enable him to deal with the worst that is present in every soul.

Truly, Jesus is unique in many ways. He is unique in his origin, his nature, his life, his work, his death, his resurrection, and his present exalted state as Lord of lords. Even the teaching of Jesus is unique, especially due to its profoundness, applicability, and purity.

The Bible

C.L. Powell

The Bible is the Book that contains the word of God. The word Bible is not found in the word of God. It is that taken from the Greek word Biblos which means book. The Bible is the Book of Books.

The Bible is really not a single book, but is a grouping of 66 books. These were written by 40 men over the span of 1600 years. The Bible is a book of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). The words "inspiration of God" means that it is "God breathed". Peter says "Knowing this first, that no prophecy is of private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Bible is divided into two distinctive parts. These are called the Old and New Testaments. These cover three dispensations of time that are called Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian. The Patriarchal age is also known as the Father age. This is called such because the heads of families were in charge of the religious activity of the family. The Mosaic age was called such because Moses, called of God, was the law giver and leader. The Christian age is called such because it is under Christ. We live in that dispensation today, therefore, Paul taught Timothy that in studying he should "rightly divide the word of truth". (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Bible, as mentioned before, was written by 40 men over a period of about 1600 years. However, no real contradictions have ever been found in it's pages. These men lived in different sections of the world and a great many years separated them. They were of different educational levels. They lived under different cultures. Different environments influenced their lives, yet they all told one story. The plan of God to redeem man.

Neither Catholic, Protestant, Nor Jew

Ancil Jenkins

Have you noticed how we all tend to apply labels? Not labels on cans or boxes, but on people, groups, and movements.

We like to divide politicians into either conservative or liberal. We often label people as sullen, or friendly. They may be either out-going or quite. Children may be tagged as hostile or submissive.

This action is not only a mistake in dealing with people, but also with religion. Men have tended to label all religions as either Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. This may be accepted by most religious groups, but is not taught in the New Testament.

Jesus and his apostles teach us that there is but one church. There was only one church planned, purposed, prophesied, and established. All deviation from this plan is of man's doing, and not of God's will. Jesus called it, "My church" (Matthew 16:18). Paul taught the church was the one body and the one bride of Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-27).

There is a sense, however, in which the Lord's church is Jewish. It has its roots in the Old Testament. Many references are made to it by the prophets. Just as the descendants of Abraham were once the chosen people of God, now all who belong to Christ are the true chosen people of God (Romans 2:24-26).

There is also a sense in which the church of the Lord is catholic. The word *catholic* means "universal". Jesus intended for his church to be for all people and nations. He sent his disciples to all the world to preach the gospel: (Mark 16:15-16). All people, tribes, races, and ethnic groups are loved by him and can come to him for salvation.

The church of the Lord in a sense, is also protestant. The word *protestant* means "to protest". The Protestant Reformation came as a reaction to the corrupt religious teachings of the sixteenth century. Today, the church of Christ protests against sin, corruption, and all teaching contrary to that which Christ delivered to us (Jude 3).

There are no labels in Christianity. You do not have to be either Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. You can be a member of the church Jesus died for and established. You can be a Christian. Nothing more, nothing less—just a Christian.