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Why Did Jesus Come

Around this time of the year people all over the world are getting ready to celebrate what is called the birthday of Jesus Christ. Even though the Bible is silent about the date of Christ's birth, yet several hundred years after Christ's birth some men selected a date for celebrating His birthday. This is not the purpose of this editorial, however, to show the error of Christmas observance, but we want to see here, why did Jesus come? There are certain things we learn that Jesus came to do.

Firstly, Jesus came to prove that God is love. If Jesus had not come and died on the cross for our sins, we would not know how much God loves us. Suppose Jesus had come and healed all people from all kinds of diseases, and had provided food for the hungry, and done many wonderful things just to impress people of His Power. In what way all of this would have benefitted us? How would we know that God loves us? But Jesus did not come to do all of those things. Rather, the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). Because God loves us, therefore He sent and gave His only begotten Son, something that was most

dear to Him, so that through Him we might have the life everlasting in God's heaven. In Christ's coming and dying on the cross for the sins of the world God demonstrated His love toward us. (Romans 5:8). "In this is love, not that we loved God," says the Bible, "but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). We know today that God loves us so much, because He gave His only begotten Son for us and allowed Him to die on the cross so that we might not perish in hell for our sins but have eternal life in heaven with Him.

Secondly, Jesus came to prove we can live a righteous life on this earth. He did it. So can we. The Bible says that He is the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2). In fact, He is the only one who has ever lived a sinless and righteous life on earth. Not that He was not tempted to sin like us all. He was. The Bible says, He was tempted in all points as we are yet, He did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15). At the outset of His ministry Satan came to Him and tempted Him (Matthew 4), and throughout His life He was tempted but He never sinned. He even prayed for those who gave false witness against Him and mocked Him and crucified Him. (Luke 23:34). He had the power to destroy them, but He prayed to the Father to forgive them. Later, one of His Apostles wrote to His followers and said, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, Leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth, who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins might live for righteousness." (1 Peter 2:21-24). Jesus came to make us righteous, and to let us know that we too, through Him, can live a righteous life.

Thirdly, Jesus came to prove that all shall be made alive. His resurrection proves this. While on earth Christ taught that the hour is coming in which all will be made alive, those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation and those who have done good, to the resurrection of eternal life in heaven. (John

5:28,29). Those who doubted the resurrection to them the Apostle Paul wrote, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Christ's resurrection is the proof of our own resurrection. I Corinthians 15:36 says, "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies." As it is true that all die, so is this true that all shall be made alive, because Christ was resurrected from the dead.

Fourthly, Jesus came to take away the sins of the world. (John 1:29) Because of sin man was and is separated from God. (Isaiah 59:2). Being in sin he was unable to come to God. Jesus came and took our sins upon Him, and thus He became the propitiation for our sins. According to Isaiah, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and affected. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6). The Good News of the Bible is that God loves you and me and all the world and therefore, He made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21). So thank God Jesus came.

There Must Be More To Life Than That

J. C. Choate

Have you ever noticed where most people spend the biggest part of their time? what they think about and talk about usually? where their real interest is? what their priorities are?

how they spend their money? The fact is, the masses of the people live very shallow lives. They mainly just exist. They just eat, drink, go through life aimlessly, and die. They have no real purpose or goals to accomplish in this world. Isn't that sad?

A good case in point would be the many who seem to live just to watch TV. They would never miss one of the movies. Beyond that is the video craze, seeing one video after the other. How long will it take for these people to get burned out on these kinds of things? Surely the day will come when they will grow tired and weary of such and hopefully will discover other things in life that may be more rewarding.

There are many who can't seem to come up with any money for the Lord's work but they can go out and spend all kinds of money on birthday parties, weddings, and such like. The least thing could cause them to miss worship but hardly anything would keep them from going to work. Have you ever noticed how that one can be sick on Sunday, and naturally he will miss worship in that case, but then he will get up on Monday and go to work? That is possible occasionally but not probable time and time again.

In looking at all of the things that go on around me, I often think that surely there must be more to life than that, and there is. Jesus can bring a new dimension to our lives. He can give us something to live for and something to die for. He can change us by taking away our old way of living and giving us a new way to live. He can give some purpose in life, some goals to set, and some work to do. He can give us hope.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). "And he said to them all if any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross

daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke 9:23).

Most people are missing out on the best things of life. They are throwing away the good for the bad. Their emphasis is upon this world and the things in it. They spend their lives working to accumulate things only to lose them or to leave them for their children to fight over. Jesus says that when we put the things of this world before him that really we are losing. On the other hand, the world would think that if you follow Jesus that you are wasting your life, but he says that in doing so that we are saving it.

True, the average person might look at the Christian life as being a dull and drab existence. Of course the Christian life is what you make of it. It is drab and dull to many, and even miserable. It is hard to live for the Lord, and love the world, and get much out of the Christian life. (Matthew 6:24). But when you put the Lord first in your life, and apply his teaching, then the Christian comes to life. As such he lives, then, a peaceful, happy, radiant life. But on the other hand, what does the world have to offer? Material things cannot satisfy. It is a dog-eat-dog type of existence. There is envy hatred, and hypocrisy. There is dishonesty, abusive language. And this life is all you have, there is not anything left. So if your thing is the world, then you are not hard to please.

Let me encourage you to try Christianity. It will make demands, but not unreasonable demands. It will require that you give up certain things but I can assure you that you will receive much more in return. It will demand that you work, but you will also have the satisfaction of your labours. You will be better off because of it and the world will be better off because of you. Above all, this life is but a taste of what the Lord has in store for you after this life has come and gone. As I said, try it. I strongly recommend it and so do many others. I believe that if you will, you will agree that truly life has more to offer than you had thought.

Take Heed What You Hear

Jim O'Connor

Job's three friends came to him to share in his mourning and to comfort him. (Job 2:11.) However, regardless of the purpose and degree of intent, it did not work. They were no help at all. In fact, Job refers to them as "physicians of no value." (Job 13:4.) They were worse than useless, they were harmful! With friends like that one needs no enemies.

Job did not have a corner on the "quack" market. Today's society is filled with these physicians of no value, offering unsound counselling wrapped in the garb of professional guidance or friendly advice. Such things as, "If you're unhappy together, get a divorce," or, "If you don't want the baby, abort it," or, "You have your right to an alternate lifestyle," etc. are freely heard on the advice market today.

Men and women who listen to such garbage do not find their problems solved, but compounded! The fruits of the advice are more difficult to deal with than the original problem.

As if the damage done by the nonsense referred to above is not enough, one can also hear such advice as, "Believe what you want, God only demands sincerity," or, "Join the church you're comfortable with," or, "Let your conscience be your guide," and even, "The way you live here has no bearing on your eternal destiny." Such advisors "darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge." (Job 38:2).

These present day counterparts of Job's "physicians of no value" know little about the word of God and care less for the soul. Counsel which is contrary to truth is poison.

The time is coming, in which, like Israel of Old, the unsound counsellor will be "ashamed of his own counsel." (Hosea 10:6).

For the present we would remind you that God says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." (Psalm 1:1).

The Love Of God

Dale Ward

The topic of God's love should be approached with necessary presumption. It is presumptuous to think that any article could adequately explain, much less describe the love of God. Yet it is necessary for his children to attempt, and succeed in understanding the love of our Father who is in heaven. Otherwise we will be incomplete children; children prone to ritual or rebellion, victims of needless extremes. Understanding God's love is accomplished by building an intimate relationship mirrored in right living, continuous prayer and grateful work.

Universal Need

Our modern world still nurtures archaic misunderstandings about God. In his book, "Your God Is Too Small," J.B. Phillips enumerates the many wrong descriptions of God prevalent today, and yesterday. He lists these in catchy titles like : Resident Policeman; Grand Old Man; and Managing Director. Each title is then explained as a perversion of the true character of God.

In the inspired text, the apostle John also attacked wrong behavior that mirrored wrong conceptions of God. "If some one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20.) It is often true that through our weaknesses we see God's love more clearly. Until we love we are not able to understand love, or as John said, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:8).

It may be true as the song says,..."what the world needs now is love, love, love..." However, it must be the right kind of love that

will properly answer this universal need. We must remember that love originates from God. "...this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.) If we are to understand even dimly the love of God we must attempt to measure the sacrificial substance of love illustrated by the cross. God's love is clearly seen when he answered the universal need, redemption by his own Son's death. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." (John 3:16).

Timeless Subject

God's love is a timeless subject. Paul approached the pagan mind, captured by love of things and numerous gods, with this attractive attribute of the one true God of heaven as he spoke to the cultured elite of his day in Athens. In Acts 17, Paul's recorded address to the court of Areopagus unerringly pulls the audience to a personal rather than material, caring rather than dictating, pure rather than perverted universal Father. Paul affirmed that as his offspring "...we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." Yet today, the same malady exists, because of similar perversions in thought and behavior.

As he reminded the Athenians, so we need to again hear that God is not "...served by human hands (like an idol—Dw) as though he needed anything," but that he willingly has provided us "...life and breath and all things." Now the application of this creative power comes from a being that loves, is near, and importantly, will judge us according to his love and righteousness by the resurrected Son.

A personal Understanding

Paul was very eloquent in Athens. He was very basic and simple with the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 13, the description of love must not only fit them and us, but also God himself. Reading these familiar verses with this perspective, that each characteristic also applies to God, makes his love very personal and precious.

For instance, since love is patient and kind, how patient and kind has God been to you? To this extent he loves me and you. Since love "...does not take into account a wrong suffered," how many of our sins has God graciously forgotten according to his promise? (Hebrews 8:12.) Since love, "...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. . ." why do I live too often without assurance, filled with worry, beset by cares of this world? God is on my side because he loves me and "...love never fails."

The Ultimate Father

Jesus was attacked for eating with sinners and associating with tax-collectors. (Luke 15:1), He answered the needs of those who attacked rather than reveal their prejudice. They, the Jews, the keepers of God's written will, did not really know God. Jesus, in the next three parables told them what God was really like: the shepherd seeking the lost sheep; the woman searching for the lost coin; and the father seeking the lost son. In this last picture, the love of God is most dramatically portrayed.

God is a loving Father wanting the love of willing children. The son's excursion into a world bent on wasting his energy and capturing his soul, is so unlike the father's home, so void of comfort, lacking the love that is necessary for proper life, that the son recognizes his basic need for the ultimate father. He hurries home, resolved to humbly ask for forgiveness and meets a running father, anxious to bestow love once again to the prodigal!

It is certainly not necessary to imitate the son's behavior in order to understand the love of God. It is necessary to imitate his example. Unlike the elder brother's assessment of the Father bred in indifference, ingratitude and selfish conceit, penitent children of the Father recognize and prize the love of the ultimate Father.

Our world needs to hear again and again this timeless subject that declares God's wondrous love for all in every nation. We must personalize this love so that he becomes the Father he wants to be and we become more loving children.

How Are You Walking?

Lindell R. Doty

In the Ephesian letter the apostle Paul contrasts how the Ephesians lived before they became Christians with how they are now to live. He uses the word "walk" frequently to indicate how they lived or conducted their lives. It was a symbolic usage of the word, and generally was further clarified.

Notice their past and present. They had once "walked" according to the world, the powers of this world, and with a spirit of disobedience. They had lived according to the lust of the flesh and fulfilled the desires of the flesh. (Ephesians 2:2, 3).

Paul admonished them to no longer walk as the Gentiles walked, for they lived in the vanity of their minds, and were darkened in understanding, and alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They were thus past feeling, had given themselves over to improper and immoral thoughts, and sexually suggestive acts and words, which resulted in uncleanness in sexual relationships, all of which were done in greediness. (Ephesians 4:17-19).

A list of do's and don'ts for the Christian follows this exhortation in Ephesians 4:20-5:14. It will do you good to read them again. But notice the "walks" that Christians are to follow.

We are to walk in good works, for we were created in Christ to do so; this is as God intended. (Ephesians 2:10).

We are to walk worthily of the gospel through which our calling has come. That walk involves the proper attitude toward our brethren, so that unity might be a reality. (Ephesians 4:1).

Christians are to imitate God and walk in love, even as Christ did, and proved by his death. (Ephesians 5:1).

Since we are Christians, we are to walk in the light which will

necessarily result in our living a good and righteous life, because it will be lived according to the truth. (Ephesians 5:8).

The Christian is also to walk carefully, not unwisely, but wisely. (Ephesians 5:15).

How are you walking? How are you living your life? Are you walking in the light, in love, in good works, carefully; in other words, are you living a life that is worthy of the gospel? If so, you will enjoy the blessings the Ephesian Christians enjoyed, and also the promises they hoped for in the future.

What Is The Church?

E. Leon Smith

The church is the kingdom Christ came to build. In Matthew 16:18 the church and kingdom are used interchangeably. Or we might say that they are one and the same.

THE CHURCH—BUILT AND IN EXISTENCE

In Matthew 16 Christ said he would build his church. If we think about it, it becomes obvious to us that the church did not exist before Matthew 16. If we proceed, in time, to Acts chapter 2 then we can see the church in existence, because people are being added to it.

IT IS THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE SAVED

Please read Acts chapter 2 again. If we consider this chapter closely we will see that the same act that caused one to be saved causes him to be added to the church. Then we can conclude that the church consists of the saved. Or we might say that the church is the dwelling place of the saved. We notice also from Acts chapter 2 that people like you and me (1) heard the gospel; (2) believed it; (3) repented; (4) were baptized. It is implied from

other texts they confessed Christ. Thus they were saved and added to the church that we read about in the Bible. Anyone today can do what they did, and the Lord will save him and add him to the same church.

THE CHURCH IS A GROUP OF IMPERFECT PEOPLE!

The church is saved by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28; Matthew 26:28). The church is continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus. (1 John 1:7). The goal of the church is perfection. (Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 6:1). It is a goal that the church falls short of many times. But the key is that the church must never lose sight of its goal, it must never quit striving to reach perfection. (Revelation 2:10).

HAVEN OF REST FOR WEARY SOULS

The Lord promised to save and to protect but not to shelter from trouble. Jesus in Matthew 7 tells of two houses, one built on the sand, the other on solid rock. The same rain and storms came on both houses; one stood, the other fell. The difference was in the foundation. One who builds his life on Christ has a foundation that will secure him in time of trouble.

Jesus invites us to come to him for help. (Matthew 11:28). He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3).

When I was a young boy and troubles came our way, my dear mother would often say, "The Lord knows." It was many years before I found out why that gave her comfort. Now when I have trouble and heartache I'm glad "the Lord knows."

There Is One Way

Roy Deaver

As is recorded in John 14:6, the Lord said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." Further, the Lord teaches; "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for

wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." (Matt. 7: 13, 14).

Paul likewise speaks of the exclusive nature of God's plan for man's salvation. He says: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Eph. 4:4-6). Paul says also: "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18). We note "THE head," of "THE body," "THE church".

But human beings (1) having a zeal for God, (2) but not zeal according to knowledge, though complete knowledge is available to them, and (3) being ignorant of God's plan for man's righteousness (but being fully responsible before God for this ignorance) have persisted in establishing their own religions, and have persisted in rejecting the sacred plan which God has given men. This is the very situation which Paul discussed (with regard to the Jews) in Romans 10:1-3. The devil, somehow, has succeeded in convincing millions of people that it really doesn't make any difference WHAT one believes, just so long as he believes SOMETHING! But, the Bible teaches that it is just as necessary for one to believe the RIGHT THING as it is for him or her to believe ANYTHING!

As long as time shall be, God's people must constantly stress that the ONLY right way is for men to be in harmony with God's word, the Bible. We must never tire of stressing the facts (1) that we walk by faith, 2 Cor. 5:7; (2) that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, Rom. 10:17; (3) that where there is no word of Christ there can be no faith, Cf., Heb. 7:14; and (4) that without faith no one can be pleasing to God, Heb. 11:6. Let us, with proper boldness, cry out as into a wilderness of sincere people lost in sin: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17).

May God continue to be with us, and to bless us, and to help us as we strive in every possible way to teach and preach God's plan for man's salvation. There is no other way.

What God Has Given Youth

G.N. Chauhan

God has been so good to you ! Have you given any thought to this ? God has given you:

A body to keep clean and healthy as a temple, especially a Christian (1 Cor. 6:19). A body wherein you will form no habits detrimental to its function.

A pair of hands to use for one's self and for others, but not against others.

A pair of feet to do errands of love, kindness, and business, but feet that will not loiter in questionable places in sin.

A pair of lips to keep pure, unspotted by strong drink or drugs, etc. Lips to speak truth, to speak kind words, but lips that never utter barnyard jokes or gutter language.

A pair of ears to hear music of the birds and human voices in wholesome praise of God—the harmony of humanity; but ears that will not heed to any thing that dishonours God, parents and elderly people.

A pair of eyes to see the good, the beautiful, and the true. Eyes that look not on porno or voyeur material, debasing the mind.

A mind to remember, to reason, and decide; a mind in which to store useful and sublime knowledge of virtue (Philippians 4:8). Not a basket for mental trash or garbage.

A soul as fair as a new-fallen snowflake, to receive impress-

ions of good. A soul that cannot be got rid of for all eternity. Christ will guide your soul in the straight and narrow way, if you will allow Him to enter your life.

You are only young once: Don't waste these wonderful years the Lord has given you. Many voices ring daily in your ears. They call you to walk in the broad way of sinful indulgence that leads you away from God to a life of shame and failure, and ultimately to a punishment worse than death (Hebrews 10: 28,29).

The whole world is in confusion worse confounded. Many adults themselves do not know the right and proper way to go. Jesus challenges you to rise above the lazy, the cheap, the vulgar ...to things higher, purer, nobler. He calls you to be strong in good works and to shine as a light in the world so that God is glorified. He admonishes you not to follow after the crowd only (Exodus 23:2).

Christ speaks to you in the Bible. It is an inspired Book; a remarkable Book, ever alive, fresh as the morning dew (Deuteronomy 32:2). You can trust its every word. It is a revelation to do evil (Ephesians 3:3,4).

Christ wants to cleanse you from the defilement of the flesh and live a pure life you can always be proud of (2 Corinthians 7:1); to have healthy fun, excitement and adventure (Isaiah 12:3); the kind of life that brings no regret; to work hard and be honest (Ephesians 4:28); to obey the laws of the country and the responsible men put in charge (Romans 13:1-7).

To obey your parents and show respect unto adults you come in contact with (Ephesians 6:1; 1 Peter 5:5); to respect the rights and properties others as a sacred duty (Deuteronomy 5:21; Matthew 7:12).

To one day marry honorably, and live a faithful life to your life partner despite one another's shortcomings (Hebrews 13:4). Virtue and chastity should be your aim and standard always (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The wise Solomon had this to say when he found that seeking

after temporal, transient satisfaction of pleasure and material things of the world, "All these things are vanity"...(Ecclesiastes 11:9,10). Further He said, Fear God and keep His commandments; this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Also, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (Ecclesiastes 12:1.)

Jonah's Faith

Weldon Langfield

The title of this article presents Jonah in a light different than usually considered. When we think of faith, we think of Abraham, Moses, Noah, Paul and others, but never Jonah. He is seen instead as the man who fled from his responsibilities only to get swallowed by a big fish. Yet, in a sense, Jonah is one of the most faithful men of the Bible.

Faith in the Power of God's Word

Jonah had faith in the power of God's word. Remember, the reason he didn't want to go to Ninevah and preach was that he was afraid the Ninevites, sworn enemies of the people of God, would repent, and not be destroyed. Jonah later prayed, "Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil." (Jonah 4:1.) We likewise need strong faith that the word of God will save souls, if only it is presented. Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16.)

Believed in God's Mercy

Jonah fully believed in the mercy of God. He knew God did not want to destroy the inhabitants of Ninevah, and would do so only if they refused to repent. Do we believe that strongly in the mercy of God? Some Christians seem to believe that God

forgives everyone but them. Certainly, as in the case of Nineveh there must be repentance. Paul said, "The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all every where repent." (Acts 17:30.) Only forsaken sins can be forgiven but God does forgive! No Christian needs to feel guilt for sins committed in the past and laid aside. We need the faith of Jonah.

Faith in People

Jonah had faith in people. He believed the people of Nineveh had good and honest hearts. Do we have faith that some of our acquaintances possess such hearts? If each of us began to teach one by one everybody we know, think of how many baptisms would result! In order to get started, however, we must have the faith of Jonah.

On Whose Terms?

Don K. Preston

The story is told that the famous skeptic Robert Ingersoll once challenged the existence of God in the following way. After delivering a speech, he pulled his watch from his pocket and said, "According to the Bible, God killed men for blasphemy. I will now blaspheme him and give him five minutes to strike me dead and damn my soul."

There was silence for one minute, then two. The tension mounted in the crowd. One woman fainted. After four minutes Ingersoll sneered.

After five minutes Ingersoll snapped shut his watch, put it in his pocket and said, "You see, there is no God, or he would have taken me at my word."

Told of the incident, Joseph Parker said, "Did the American gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of God in five minutes?"

Ingersoll was really not much different than an awful lot of folks who want God to operate on their conditions and not his.

Some want God to prove his existence to them in the way they dictate. We accept the existence of other things because of the logical or even in some cases, the mathematical probability of their existence. We do not see them but we know they exist. But when it comes to God some demand that he allow them to put him in a test tube or they refuse to believe! And since they set the criteria for proof, and reserve the right to change the rules at any time, they confidently affirm that God does not exist because he has not satisfied their demands for proof!

And there are other ways some try to set the rules for God. They sometimes say: "God, if you just do this or that for me then I will obey you." They want God to do for them but they are not too willing to do for him. They want to set the rules!

Another way is in the way religious folks try to serve God. They do things not because the Bible tells them to, but because they like it. Man has changed the form of baptism, the form of church organization, the time for observing the Lord's supper, the subjects and reason for baptism, the pattern of worship, the pattern of authority, and on and on we could go. And some confidently expect, or demand that God accept this as pleasing to him!

As in the case of Mr. Ingersoll, some seem to think that because the Lord does not strike them down or write a message in the sky that this proves they are okay. But this is not the case. The Bible has always said that God will wait to judge us. It is appointed unto men once to die then the judgment, says Hebrews 9:27. What this implies is that we must allow God to set the terms for our religion now, because the time is coming when he will have his way whether we like it or not.

"Water?"

Dave Miller

Today's religious world finds it difficult to accept that immer-

sion in water is essential to salvation. They believe, instead, that a person is saved prior to baptism, rather than at the point of baptism. They, apparently, are unable to conceive of God incorporating such a simple, ordinary substance—like water—into such a significant event—man's salvation. Many a person, upon hearing God's will, balks at his command and exclaims: "Are you saying that the only thing that stands between me and God is water?!"

As the Israelites sought to escape the bondage of Egypt, what stood between them and freedom? Water! In fact, they were baptized in the Red Sea to escape slavery and enter into Moses' leadership. (1 Corinthians 10:1-2.) Moses referred to this water immersion as "salvation." (Exodus 14:13).

What stood between Naaman and cleansing salvation from his dreadful skin disease? Water! His attitude was much like those today who minimize and refuse to accept the divine role of water in man's salvation. (2 Kings 5:11-12.) Nevertheless, Naaman was not healed until he was immersed in water! (2 Kings 5:14).

What stood between the man born blind and the ability to see? Water! If he had refused to apply water from the Pool of Siloam to his eyes just as Jesus had instructed, he would have remained blind. (John 9:7, 11).

What stood between Noah and his wicked peers doomed to destruction? Water! Peter, in fact, declared Noah's salvation from the sinful world of his day to have been "by water." (1 Peter 3:20). He then went on to declare what the denominational world persistently denies: baptism now saves us! (1 Peter 3:21).

Water has never actually had any inherent ability to cleanse, spiritually. God is always the one who does the saving. But he chose to save and cleanse people only after they obeyed his command by faith. (Compare Hebrews 11:30.) If these had refused to use water to escape bondage, cleanse skin, remove blindness, and avoid destruction—they would have remained in bondage,

diseased, blind, and would have been destroyed! If they had sought to use the water for a different purpose than that given by God, they would have remained in their dire condition. So people today who reject the role of water in salvation, that is, baptism unto remission of sins, are yet in their sins, unsaved, disobedient and displeasing to God.

Does The End Justify The Means ?

John Waddey

“For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Such a principled man as Paul would be shocked to hear that anyone thought that he believed and taught that the end justifies the means. Certainly, the above passage does not advocate such a compromising view.

His main point of discussion was liberty circumscribed by love. Paul had the right to expect financial support from those he taught. Yet, at Corinth he had not exercised that right, lest they question his motives and that hinder his work among them. He then proceeded to explain that this was a general principle of conduct in his work of evangelism. He was willing to make innocent concessions to Jews, Gentiles and weak brethren in order to win them or strengthen them for Christ.

The apostle was not being two-faced or hypocritical. He was discussing things not fundamental to the essence of Christianity. These harmless or incidental matters could be waived for a higher goal.

Paul had much freedom in Christ (5:1), yet he willingly brought himself under restrictions in hope of saving others. (9:22.) The law of circumcision was no longer binding upon Gentiles. Paul vigorously resisted those who sought to enforce the practices on Titus, a Gentile, (Galatians 2:3-5.) Yet, in order to open a door of salvation to the Jews, Paul took Timothy and circumcised him. (Acts 16:3.) While you have no right to bind your opinions and scruples upon me, I do have the right to restrict myself for your sake.

“Paul was understanding, sympathetic, open-minded. He put himself in the other person’s place. He tried to view things from the other person’s position. He was willing to yield, wherever possible, in matters of no moral significance, always to cultivate good will, to gain another convert for Christ, or to strengthen a weak brother in Christ.” (M.J. Berquist.)

When the matter involves no moral or spiritual principle of truth, we do well to avoid an inflexible, unyielding spirit. We should strive to be openminded and as accommodating to others as the Lord will allow.

Charles Hodge wrote the following.

“There are two things therefore, to be carefully observed in all cases of concession to the opinions and practices of others: first, that the point conceded to be a matter of indifference, for Paul never yielded in the smallest measure to anything which was in itself wrong. In this his conduct was directly the opposite to that of those who accommodate themselves to the sins of men, or to the superstitious observances of false religions. And secondly, that the concession does not involve any admission that what is in fact indifferent in a matter of moral objection.”

The Curse Of Religious Division

Clem Thurman

Just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed, "*Nither for these [the apostles] only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*" (Jno. 17:20-21). When the Lord came to this earth Jews and Gentiles were living under different laws, and were thus alienated into warring camps. The Jews were also divided into warring sects : the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodiant, Essenes.

We look around today at a world that seems hopelessly divided into different religious bodies. And as the prophet of old said, "*My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?*" (Jer. 5:31), To justify such religious division, people argue, "One church is as good as another" or "We can't all see it alike." Some even contend that it is God's will that we should be separated into different religious groups. But it is still true that "*God is not the author of confusion, but of peace*" (1 Cor, 14:33). God is not the author of religious division, and in whatever form it appears, division stands opposed to the prayer of Christ. If we could understand the real curse of division, we would work more zealously for the unity for which Jesus prayed.

The Division in the Church at Corinth

While many people extol the "blessings" of denomination-ism, they ignore the admonitions of the Lord to believers in Corinth. They had division that was almost precisely what the system of denominationalism is today. There were those who said, "*I am af Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ*" (1 Cor. 1.12). Surely each "group" would claim to be Christians, would claim to follow Christ: but they were divided. Just as the denominational world is divided today. Did the Lord approve of it in Corinth 1900 years ago ? Listen as He tells them :

"Let there be no divisions among you" (1 Cor. 1:10). That is plain, isn't it? That was the the Lord's will. And it still is.

There were some admonitions given to these sectarians in Corinth, and they apply today: *"That ye all speak, the same thing"* (v. 10). Some will cry, "That is impossible." But Peter wrote, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Pet. 4:11). If everyone spoke only as the word of God, all would speak the same thing. It is when we speak what God has not, or try to change what He has spoken, that division occurs. But notice further: *"Be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (v. 10). Again, many will say that cannot be done. But it is commanded of the Lord! Let me illustrate how simple it is for people to be of *"the same mind and the same judgment."* Last week I figured our mailing cost for GOSPEL MINUTES for the week at \$3,273.77; when I received from the postal service their copy of the charges, it was \$3,273.77. Although we figured the charges independently from each other, we arrived at identical answers. How come? We have from the postal service a copy of their rules for charges under 2nd class mailing, so much per paper and so much per pound. I know how many copies we mail, and I know the weight; they figure the number of copies, and the weight. We both use the same rules for charges, and thus we are *"of the same mind and the same judgment."* It is simple, really. When all believers will go by the same rules, by the same Book, they will then be of *"the same mind and the same judgment."*

Three Great Questions to be Answered

If all would honestly face the questions in 1 Cor. 1:13, all denominations would immediately cease to exist: *"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized into the name of Paul?"* The church which Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), the church to which He adds the saved (Acts 2:47) and for which He shed His blood (Acts 20:28) is *"His body"* (Col. 1:18). And that body (church) is His bride (Eph. 5:22-30): *"So that they are no longer two, but one. . . I speak of Christ and the church"* (Eph. 5:32-33). If Christ is not divided, then we cannot divide His members—which is precisely what denominationalism tries to do!

To divide His body (that is, to divide believers, who are members of Christ, Rom. 12:4-5) is to divide Christ.

But the Lord, through Paul's writing, asks two more questions : *"Was Paul crucified for you ? or were you baptized into the name of Paul ?"* The implications are clear : we dare not follow anyone except Christ ! Not Martin Luther, not Wesley, not Campbell, not Eddy, not Young. Only Christ died for us, and therefore we are to follow only Christ, And, while many disparage the necessity of baptism, to show relationship with Christ the apostle asks, *"Were you baptized into the name of Paul ?"* Some called themselves after the name of Paul, but Paul condemned the practice because they had not been baptized in the name of Paul. When people are *"baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 2:38,41), the Lord saves them and adds them to His church (Acts 2:47). And we don't have the right to wear any name into which we were not baptized ! If we are baptized into the name of Christ (Acts 19:5), we wear His name (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16; Rom. 16:16). Only when we are baptized with a different baptism can we wear a different name.

The Prayer of Christ for Unity of Believers

Jesus, knowing the cross lay just ahead, prayed for the apostles, then said, *"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in three, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou didst send me"* (Jno. 17:20-21). Notice that Jesus is praying for all believers, in all ages, for *"faith cometh by hearing the word of God"* which was delivered by the apostles (Rom. 10:17; 1 Thes. 2:13). That means He wants us to be one today.

Jesus defines the unity for which He prayed : *"As thou, Father art in me, and I in thee."* He prayed for us to be one in the same way that He and the Father are one. That means *"speak the same thing"* as noted above; can you imagine the Father and Jesus Christ teaching conflicting doctrines ?!! That means being members of the one body, which is His church. Who can imagine

the Father in one church teaching one way of salvation and Christ in a different church teaching a different way ?!! Really, I don't believe that one can imagine the Lord being a member of ANY denomination ! And if He would not be in a denomination, why should you be ? He prayed that all believers be one. He expects us to avoid division, pray for unity (as He did) and work for unity of all believers.

Just before He went to the cross, the Lord prayed this prayer in Jno. 17. When He came to this divided world, it was to bring unity. *"He is our peace, who hath made both one...that he might reconcile both unto God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby"* (Eph. 2:14-16). In other words, His death was to bring about the unity of all believers by reconciling us to God *"in one body."* Did Christ die in vain ? Was His death wasted ? He willingly went to the cross, *"That they may all be one."* If He was willing to do that, why can't we put aside petty preferences and prejudices and unite upon what He wants as revealed in His word ?

The Lord tells us, *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"* (Eph. 4:4-6). There is the Lord's basis for unity, plainly stated for all of us. Let us determine that we shall learn the will of Christ and live by that word He has given : *"Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). Let us not contend for *"my faith"* nor *"your faith,"* but for *"the faith once for all delivered."* For by doing so we shall bring about the answer to that fervent prayer of our Lord Jesus. *"That they may all be one."*

Do We Really Care ?

Johnny Ramsey

The New Testament not only reveals the religion of Christ in

vivid detail, it also gives a solemn warning to anyone who would add to or take away from the pattern of Christianity: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God..I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book : and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book" (2 Jno. 9; Rev. 22:18-19). Jesus tells us that "the seed of the kingdom is the word of God" (Lk. 8:11). Thus, the power of Truth resides not in apostolic succession, nor in the creeds and catechisms of men, but in the gospel of Christ. That gospel is contained within the New Testament Scriptures. We dare not preach any other (Gal. 1:8-9).

Even the casual reader of the Bible would admit that pure Christianity existed in the first century. The New Testament gives us a clear picture of the church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18). The worship, doctrine and life of the early Christians can be ascertained from a study of the word of God. Regardless of what has transpired between the first and twentieth century one can be a Christian today just like Paul, Peter, Stephen and Philip. Not some kind of Christian. Just simply a Christian, a member of the same church the first century Christians were members of. If we do what they did, teach what they taught—we will certainly be what they were !

Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost" (Lk. 19:10). He left the glory of heaven to suffer and die for the unredeemed (Lk. 24:26). The Lamb of God desires to take away the sins of the world (1 Jno. 1:29) and reconcile mankind to the creator. We often sing :

*Souls in danger loak above, Jesus completely saves,
He well lift you by His loxe, Out of the angry waves.*

But, factually, Christ left the task of salvation in the hands

of His followers. The parting concern of Jesus was the preaching of the gospel to every creature in every nation until the end of time (Mk. 16:15). First century saints took the Master seriously as they daily, publicly and privately, proclaimed the glad story of victory over sin and death (Acts 5:42;8:4).

When the apostle Paul beheld a city full of idols, "His spirit was provoked within him" (Acts 17:16). But maybe sin does not bother many of us very much. Jeremiah could not keep quiet because God's word was too precious (Jer. 20:9). "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days" (1 Sam. 3:1), and it is precious today, also. Two centuries ago, Isaac Bickerstaffe sadly wrote these words, "I care for nobody, not I." But the love of Christ propels us (2 Cor. 5:14) into sharing the saving message with those steeped in error. With David and Paul we exclaim, "I believed, therefore I have spoken." Do we really care if millions are lost in sin?

There are many Bible examples of those who remained quiet because of a lack of courage and conviction. There are also golden gems in Scripture concerning loyal followers of Jehovah who had to herald the truth in a world filled with iniquity. Praise God for such nobility! In Acts 4:20 and 26:25 we thrill to the devotion of the apostles of Christ who just HAD to speak the things they knew to be true regardless of the danger. J.H. Hunt was sadly correct when he stated in 1850, "Some have a talent for silence." It is also correct that some speak before they think, but all Christians should know the sacred text and gladly impart it to others (Rom. 1:14-16). H.B. Steele contributed these points in a spiritual hymn;

To our Redeemer's glorious name
Awake the sacred song;

O may His love, immortal flame,
Tune every heart and tongue.

It takes commitment to heaven's cause to speak out against

error. We will never have too many Nathans who reboke folk in high places (2 Sam. 12). Could it be that John Wilmot was correct when he wrote three centuries ago? "Most men are cowards!"

Do we really care? Can our neighbors cry, in the language of Psa. 142:4, "No man cares for my soul." If lost souls bother us, we will do the following :

1. Learn the Bible, so we can teach others (1 Pet. 3:15).
2. Grasp every opportunity to speak for Jesus (Psa. 107:2).
3. Expose error, so truth will shine (Eph. 5:11).
4. Never encourage false teachers (2 Jno. 11).
5. Present the truth clearly at all times (Jno. 3:32).
6. Learn denominational doctrines and church history so we can converse intelligently with others (Col. 2:8-10).
7. Be Christ-like and not lose composure, even if those in error ridicule us and the gospel (Acts 26:25).
8. Be steadfast, even when people won't listen (Gal. 6:9).
9. Remember that "the seed is the word of God" (Lk. 8:11) and "God gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).

Those who are not ashamed of the gospel will always be ready to pay the debt we owe to those about us—the message of salvation (Rom. 1:14-16).