



THE BIBLE TEACHER

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. *That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of His one church everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).*
2. *That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must be told to believe in Christ, to repent of wrong, to confess Christ the Son of God, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:22).*
3. *That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.*
4. *That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).*
5. *Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).*

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THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning
of knowledge”***

Not only does the Bible say, at Proverbs 1:7 that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but at Psalm 111:10 it also says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Man has always been in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. And, indeed, today man has gained tremendous knowledge and wisdom, speaking earthly. Man has increased, by his knowledge and wisdom, the power of his eyes so he can see through cameras and televisions and telescopes things which may be thousands of miles away from him. Man has increased, by his knowledge and wisdom, the power of his hands and the power his voice so that he can send and receive messages anywhere in the world almost immediately through fax machines and internet and e-mail and telephones. Also, the power of his legs, man has so tremendously increased, by his knowledge and wisdom, that he is flying in the air in the power driven flying machines, called aeroplanes, and speeding on the earth in trains and automobiles about which his forefathers could not even imagine a few years ago!

But the knowledge and the wisdom the godly fear brings to

man is not of the world. Rather, the fear of God teaches man that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceed from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). The fear of God makes man to think that "for what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange of his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Man is God's creation. Man needs God. God has spoken to man. God has revealed the facts about man to man and about Himself. The Bible contains the mind and the will of God for man. Man can close his mind and his eyes and his ears; man can reject God's will by refusing to accept it; he can make fun of it in every way he wants to. But the fact remains unchanged that man cannot live by bread alone; that is, worldly things cannot bring lasting and eternal satisfaction, contentment and peace to man. And, what is a man profited even if he gains the whole world? Kings and emperors have lived on this earth; men and women of many achievements have walked on this earth; man could become powerful, in the worldly sense; a renowned personality; a great artist or athlete; or in whatever way, as man count greatness. But, if he loses his own soul, the inward, the real and the eternal man, when he dies and departs this earth, then what has he profited from all his existence on earth? That's the knowledge and the wisdom that man need to attain!

God's word teaches man that because of sin he is dead in sin and is not worthy to go and live with God in heaven eternally. He tells man that He has done something for man that man can accept and become worthy of heaven. That is, the sacrifice of His Son, (His Word, who became flesh), for the propitiating of man's sin. He asks man to accept His Son by believing in Him, and He asks man to repent or quit living in sin, and He asks man to be baptized in water for the remission of sins, and thus showing his own death for sin and burial in the grave of water and resurrection to live in the new life with Christ after coming out from the baptismal water. The knowledge and the wisdom that God provides to man is the realisation of the fact that man is a dual and an eternal being; that he is on earth for a few years; that he will live forever, either in hell without God, or in heaven with God.

And, now, as the wise man said "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, *for*

this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14). Do we really fear God? If we do, we'll keep every commandment that He has given to us. That's all what really matters.

Who Can Be Fellowshiped?

J.C. CHOATE

Fellowship means friendship, association, being involved with one another, acceptance on the basis of a certain set of rules or standards. Spiritually it has to do with agreement on belief, obedience to commands, being members of the same family.

If there are those we can fellowship then that means that there are those that we cannot fellowship. First, let us notice some of those that we cannot fellowship:

1. Satan or devils. Paul said, "But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." (1 Corinthians 10:20).
2. Unbelievers. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 14:1).
3. Sinners. "... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. . ." (1 Timothy 1:15).
4. The Worldly. "Love not the world. . ." (1 John 2:15).
5. False teachers. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines and commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9).
6. The unfaithful. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 10, 11).
7. Those who have been scripturally withdrawn from. (Matthew 18:15-17).

Some that we can fellowship:

1. Those who have obeyed the gospel. After a large number had obeyed the Lord according to Acts 2:38-40, the record says, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42).
2. Those who are children of God, members of the Lord's family, the church. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27).
3. Those who are one in Christ. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10).
4. Those who wear the same name. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Members are Christians (1 Peter 4:16) and the church is the church of Christ. (Romans 16:16).
5. Those who worship in spirit and in truth. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).
6. Those who preach the same gospel. Must preach the gospel of Christ. (Mark 16:15). Woe be unto us if we preach another gospel. (Galatians 1: 6-9).
7. Those who remain faithful. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10).

Do you have the fellowship of God, Christ, and his people? If you don't, you are lost and without hope. Fellowship with Satan and those of darkness will only destroy you. Turn to the Lord and his way that you may be saved and have the hope of eternal life. Who do you fellowship? Who fellowships you? This tells the whole story.

Worship

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

In preparation for the first worship assembly in their home, Andrew and Rachel were studying the Scriptures carefully. "Just as we were taught wrong things about how to become a Christian," Andrew reasoned, "it's possible that the things we were taught about worship were wrong. In fact, *some of the things must be wrong, because there is so much difference between Catholic worship and Baptist worship!*"

"Here's a verse in the concordance," Rachel said, "*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*"

"A good warning," agreed Andrew. "So, back to our favorite chapter!" he laughed. "After the people were baptized and added to the church—which is our position now!—verse 42 says, '*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*' This tells us several things about their worship: the 'apostles' doctrine' for us would be the study of the Scriptures; the 'breaking of bread' would be the supper in memory of Jesus' death, as He had taught them just before His crucifixion; and prayers—"

"But is that all?" questioned Rachel. "On which day did the early Christians worship? I remember hearing about the 'Sabbath' day, and of course most churches worship on Sunday. But the Sabbath is Saturday, so which is the right day for true worship?"

"Let's read and see what we can find in Acts," suggested Andrew.

There was silence for some time and then Rachel asked, "I wonder why God didn't just write out a list of how He wants us to worship?"

"Well. . ." Andrew answered thoughtfully, "I don't know all the reasons, but look at what we're doing, so that we can understand what true worship should be! We're reading and

studying a lot of Scriptures! One reason was surely so that those who really want to know the truth will be drawn into more study of God's word, and learn many other things in the process."

"That's right," agreed Rachel. "Just think how many times we've begun with one search and have gotten involved in several others along the way!"

"For instance, here in Acts 11," Andrew said, "in verse 19 it shows that when the church was scattered because of persecution, they went out but they taught the gospel to Jews only. But in verse 20 it says that some of them began to preach to the Hellenists in the city of Antioch. Those weren't Jews—as Cornelius wasn't a Jew. In Acts 10 Peter had been especially sent to him by God, so this continues with the story of the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles."

"In verse 26 it says that Barnabas and Paul assembled with the church in Antioch for a whole year! So we know by this that the Christians met regularly," reasoned Rachel.

"And the end of the verse says, '*... the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch*'. So the church met, and they were called Christians—but *when did they meet?*" Andrew asked, continuing to read.

"Here in chapter 13, in verse 5, it says that Paul and Barnabas came to Salamis on a missionary journey and that they went to the synagogues of the Jews. In verse 14 it says they came to Antioch in Pisidia, '*and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down*'. Does this mean that they continued to worship with the Jews, in the synagogue, on the Sabbath day, as Christians, as the church?" asked Rachel.

"Paul and Barnabas were on a missionary journey, so there weren't any churches in those cities yet," answered Andrew. "In verse 15, Paul read the Scriptures and then preached to them, but in verse 45 the Jews rejected the message and in verse 46 Paul said that he would turn to the Gentiles. But when he left the city, he left behind disciples who had been converted by the preaching Paul and Barnabas did, according to verse 52."

"Ah! Look at chapter 20!" Rachel exclaimed. '*Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul... spoke to them...*' (verse 7).

"This is interesting," said Andrew. "In verse 6 it said that they stayed seven days with the church, but then even after

meeting with the Christians for worship and preaching. Till midnight, they left immediately to continue their journey! So even though they were in such a hurry to go on that they didn't even rest after being up all night, they had waited seven days, passing over Saturday—the Sabbath —, waiting for the church to come together on the *first day of the week.*"

"In the concordance, 1 Corinthians 16:2 also talks about the first day of the week," Rachel said. "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*"

"So this tells about *the day of worship* and also that they were to take up *collections* for the work of the church, Andrew concluded.

"We are getting a good picture of worship in the early church, Rachel said. "All groups also sing hymns—so that's a part of worship, too. For singing, the concordance has several verses. One is Ephesians 5:19: '*Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*'"

"There is no mention of a band or any instrument in that verse, except that the melody was to be made in the heart," observed Andrew. "We will continue to study on these things, to be sure that we're understanding the whole truth regarding worship. Surely, we can't go wrong, though, if we do what we've read so far."

During the week Andrew and Rachel spoke to several of their friends and to their family members about the period of worship they were planning in their home the following Sunday. What a special time it was for them when Rachel's sister, Mary, and her family, Elizabeth and her husband, and John, Andrew's close friend at work came to be with them.

Andrew led in the worship, explaining first the background for the meeting. "Rachel and I have been studying the Scriptures, wanting to know exactly what the Bible teaches about Christianity and how we must be saved, then how we are to live and worship God. We want to share with you all the wonderful truths we've learned. God's word is the guide for all of us, and so it is important that we read and study the Scriptures and obey them.

"Part of our obedience to God is coming together to worship

Him. All that we read in the Scriptures shows His great love for us, and how much He did for us in the death of Jesus for our sins. In John 14:6 Jesus taught so clearly, *'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'*. When Rachel and I decided that we must put God first in our lives, we were faced with the questions, 'But which is the correct way? There are many churches, and we have found that they are teaching many different things, many different ways to be saved. Which church is right? Which doctrine is right?'

"To answer our questions, we went first to the Scriptures, reading and trying to understand just what Jesus and the apostles were teaching. We learned from the book of Acts that Jesus' family—the body of believers who make up His church—was begun when the Holy Spirit came with power on the apostles in Acts 2, just after Jesus' resurrection from the grave and His return to heaven. On that day the gospel of salvation was preached for the first time, so that the people could obey God and be forgiven of their sins. They were told in verse 38, *'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'*. In verse 41 we are told that 3000 were baptized, and in verse 47 it says, *'...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved'*.

"When we went to the priest of the Catholic church and to the preacher of the Baptist church and asked them about the church and salvation, they told us things that were very different to what we were reading in the Scriptures. So we were convinced that if we wanted to please God, we must do exactly what those early people did, and that God would then add us to that same church that we read about in His word.

"Today is the first time we have met like this in our home, as a very young part of the body or church of Christ, to worship God as our Father. We have read in the Scriptures that the early church gathered on the first day of the week—no longer on the seventh or Sabbath day, as the Jews did—to praise God through songs and prayers. They also studied the Scriptures, and in Acts 20:7 we read that the church came together on the first day of the week to break bread, or to eat the supper Jesus had taught them to remember, in Matthew 26:26: *'... Jesus took bread; blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said,*

"Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'."

"It is so important that we remember that we are the ones in need of salvation. When we read of the greatness of God, we are reminded of our own smallness, of our own dependence on Him for guidance. Jesus said in John 12:49, '*... I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak*'. Because He has spoken only what the Father directed, He warned in verse 48, '*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*'.

"Jesus' words of warning are the reason we are gathered here today: to search the New Testament to understand what He wants us to be and to do, in order that when we come to the time of judgment, His words will assure that we will be saved eternally."

To be Continued . . .

Sound Doctrine

FRANCIS DAVID

In the religious world today we see there is an attack on sound doctrine. There are lot of doctrinal weaknesses prevailing in the world. People are accepting anything in the name of Christianity. Apostle Paul predicted this by saying "... the time will come when they will not endure SOUND DOCTRINE, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." (II Tim. 4:3). Yes the time has come and we can see how the word of God is being mishandled by many religious leaders. They are trying to teach and preach the things which are contrary to the Bible. The Bible should be handled rightly and carefully (II Tim. 2:15).

Even people today would like to hear the things which are smooth and easy. It was just like in Prophet Isaiah's days. In his

days, people wanted him and asked him that "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." (Isa. 30:10). Yes, there is no doubt, people want to hear smooth things in the name of religion. If you speak against adultery, fornication, drinking etc. they would not like it. Paul said in II Tim. 4:2, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season, Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching." A true teacher of the Bible will never compromise with the error. The preachers must take this responsibility very seriously because they will be accountable to God.

We as gospel preachers, must uphold the Sound doctrine. We must understand that sweet words and polished words will not save the souls of men but the truth of the gospel will save us. We the churches of Christ are preaching and teaching the gospel through literature and others means and our aim is to tell the message as it is told in the inspired word of God. The Bible speaks about one church and we tell people that there is only one church which Christ built (Matt. 16:18) and Christ Jesus is the head of this church (Col. 1:18) We tell people that since he is the head of the body, the church, He is also the saviour of the body. (Eph. 5:23). This church is not a denomination. We talk about it and teach about it, because this is a true fact and true doctrine of the Bible.

What about the plan of salvation? We teach that there is only one plan of salvation based on the Scriptures. This plan include, Believing in Jesus (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Acts 16:31), Repenting of ones sins (turning away from sinful life (Lk 13:3, Acts 17:30; 3:19; 2:38); Confess Christ Jesus as the son of God (Rom. 10:9, 10; Mt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:35-38), and then be baptised (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21); Now this is the plan of God and it is based on the Bible. Many may not like to hear about it but this is the fact. This plan is supported by the Verses from the Scriptures.

What about our worship? Our worship should be based on the Bible. No human traditions, man made doctrines are required to be included in our worship. We read and it says that "God is Spirit, and those who worship HIM must worship HIM in spirit and truth. (John 4:24). If our worship is based on man made doctrines then it is a vain worship. (Matt. 15:8,9). In our worship we sing for the Lord, we pray, have Bible Message from the

preacher, remember Jesus's death by partaking in the Lord's supper (Unleaven bread and grape juice). Acts 20:7 tells us that the disciples came together on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread. Now if it is monthly or bi-monthly or quarterly then it is not based on Bible and that is an unsound doctrine. We give our collection (offering) each first day of the week because this is what we read in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). This is entirely a free-will offering because the Lord loves the cheerful giver and not the one who gives grudgingly or of necessity (2 Cor. 9:6,7). Our singing is without any instrumental music because according to sound doctrine we need to sing and make melody in our hearts or minds and not on musical instruments (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

The need of the hour is Sound doctrine. We must emphasize and I should say we must re-emphasized it.

The church of Christ is the greatest institution in the world. The members of the church must abide by the Sound doctrine and must teach and preach about it as well. We are not supposed to add or take away the things from the Scriptures. We need to teach it as it is. In the 19 verse and 22 chapter of book of Revelation. We read: "if anyone takes away from the book of prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life. . . . John while writing to Christians says: "Whosoever transgresses and *does not* abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). Do you abide by the doctrine of Christ? Have you accepted the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is sound. Let us follow the sound doctrine.

What About Jesus?

MEL FUTRELL

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I the son of man am?" They responded, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Evidently, even in the first century there was some

confusion about who Jesus was. Our Lord though doesn't leave it at that, he continues. "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living GOD" (Matthew 16:13-16). Brethren, this confession of Peter's is the rock that the Lord's church is built upon. It's that important and I would hope and expect that anytime we are asked the same question, we would give the same answer (1 Peter 3:15).

Unfortunately, there has been and is today much confusion about Jesus. Some scoff at the belief that Jesus was a historical figure. In other words, that he actually and really existed. Others, although affirming that he existed deny his deity. So the fundamental questions for us today are: Was Jesus a historical figure? And if he was, was he a mere man or was he the divine messiah? Brethren, the answer one gives does make a difference. If Jesus is the Christ, the Son of GOD (John 20:30-31) then the church is obligated to give Jesus the *preeminence in all things* (Col. 1:18; Mt. 28:18). In Matthew 22:42 Jesus asked the Pharisees this compound question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Now with that question in mind please consider the following.

Albert Schweitzer, in his volume *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, 1906 had this to say.

"The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of GOD, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration never had any existence. This image has not been destroyed from without, it has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another."

Jon Murray, president of the American Atheists, is quoted in the December 1994 issue of *Life Magazine*, in an article titled, "Who Was Jesus?" as saying:

"There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living, breathing, sentient human being by that name. Ever. (The Bible) is a fictional, nonhistorical narrative. The myth is good for business." (page 68)

Such was and is the disposition of the disbeliever in Jesus. Although we are saddened by their disinterest in what GOD's word says on the subject. Yet, we are not willing that their objection alone be allowed to settle the matter. What if it were possible to produce testimony from sources not sympathetic to Jesus or his cause that authenticate his very existence, might not that be convincing? Brother F.W. Mattox has correctly stated, "The facts of the life of Christ are confirmed both by pagans and unbelieving Jews" (*The Eternal Kingdom*, 1961, P. 31). The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, said:

"At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. *He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles.* This was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they who before had conceived an affection for him did not cease to adhere to his. For on the third day he appeared to them alive again. The divine prophets having foretold these and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists at this time." (*ANTIQUITIES*, Book 18, Chap. 3 Section 3).

Others such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny could be cited for further verification. But friend, surely one can see that the historical evidence confirming the existence of Jesus is overwhelming. And the cries of those who disavow his life are muted by the voice of history.

Now let's turn our attention to those who affirm that Jesus existed, yet deny his deity. By deity we mean divinity or being divine, a possessor of divine nature. The fundamental question then is, was Jesus a mere man or was he the divine Messiah? Again, the answer one gives does make a difference.

As far back as New Testament times there have been those who conceded Jesus' existence but denied his deity. The books of First and Second John have a great deal to say about "antichrists" (1 John 2: 18, 22; 4:3:2 John 7). In John's writings the term antichrist seems to apply to all who manifest a disbelief in Jesus as the Christ (see 1 John 2:22). (NOTE: One should not equate the terms antichrist and false Christ—Mt. 24:24). Many

commentators believe these antichrists to be those later identified as Gnostics, a name derived from the Greek word "gnosis" meaning knowledge. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt as to the apostle John's position relative to those denying the Lord's deity. John exhorts the brethren to abide in Christ and not be led astray by false prophets who deny that Jesus is the Christ and that he came in the flesh (1 John 2:26-29; 4:1-3).

In more recent times, about 70 years ago, Charles T. Russell founder of the International Bible Students (now the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses) said Christ,

"was the highest of all Jehovah's creatures, so also he was the first, the direct creation of GOD, . . . and then he, as Jehovah's representative, and in the exercise of Jehovah's power, and in his name, created all things, angels, principalities and powers, as well as the earthly creation" (*Studies in the Scriptures*, 1924, p. 27).

Brethren, one need not be an Einstein to figure out that the above position has Jesus relegated to creature status. And so it is that the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ; thinking he was the archangel Michael, a created being. Further proof of their denial is attested by simply consulting THEIR OWN Bible, *The New World Translation* which renders John 1:1 thus,

"In the beginning the word was, and the word was with GOD, and the word was a god."

Now brethren, please compare that with the rendering of John 1:1 in a reliable translation such as the King James Version.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD."

It would be impossible to miss the difference in the two. The former denies that Jesus is GOD, the latter affirms that he is. What will we say to such blatant dishonesty? The simple fact of the matter is because of their own position denying the deity of Christ they were forced to prepare their own translation or else panic everytime they looked at John 1:1. When people will stoop to doing that (making "their own" bible) there's not much they won't do or say.

The Jews viewed Jesus and still do as a carpenter who decided to preach, a good man, but not the Messiah. Almost 2000 years ago our Lord told the Jews.

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24-KJV).

Other religious groups are equally wrong in the stance they take on the deity of Jesus. But remember this, the Bible is correct when it says of Jesus:

"For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."
(Colossians 2:9)

Brethren, well do I remember hearing my "Pa" Gould through the years comment on John 8:58 which says "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." He would say, and correctly so, that the words "I am" are the language of the ETERNALLY PRESENT. Did Jesus have a beginning? No. Is Jesus Christ eternal? YES. Is it correct for us to call Jesus, GOD? ABSOLUTELY.

Brethren, why, so many people will not believe what the Bible says about Jesus just flatly escapes me. The fact that Jesus is the Son of GOD is the foundation you and I rest upon (Mt. 16:16). The fact that Jesus is GOD (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8) is the awesome truth of the ages.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"
(Hebrews 13:8).

Seeking Jesus

JERRI MANASCO

The wise men came to Jerusalem, having an inquiry and an intention. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2). These men were seeking Jesus, even when he

was a baby! They were not seeking merely out of curiosity, but they had a specific purpose in seeking. They sought the new king of Israel, knowing by some means that the time had arrived when the "desire of all nations" had entered the world. All the hopes of the human race were met in that singular birth. Thus with great anticipation these men aspired to find the baby born in Bethlehem. Others have sought Jesus and still seek him, but for what purpose?

Herod sought the child Jesus, but his seeking was that of a hypocrite. Though pretending and professing to seek Jesus "that I may come and worship him also" (Matthew 2:8), his real intent was to murder this new king before he posed a threat to his political ambitions (verse 13). Today there are liberal "scholars" wearing the badge "Bible Critic" who pretend to be seeking to find the "real" Jesus, but in fact they are out to destroy the Jesus who is so dear to the heart of every wise seeker! There have recently been great claims made by a body of such men who say they have discussed the new testament texts and have decided that most of what the texts say about Jesus is nothing more than fanciful inventions of the disciples of Jesus. Such men claim that they only want to "come and worship him also," when their real intent is to discredit the integrity of the inspired word of God. As Herod attempted to kill the Son of God, so these murder the biblical text. Everything from the virgin birth to the marvelous resurrection is being cast out as fictitious. How tragic!

Mary and Joseph sought Jesus, but *theirs was the search of someone who through carelessness had become separated from him!* Having left Jerusalem after the passover, Mary and Joseph misplace Jesus because they **supposed** he was in their travelling group (Luke 2:44). Discovering him to be absent and unaccounted for, they immediately began their search for his twelve year old boy. They sought him among their kinfolks and friends and failed to find him (verse 44). It was when they returned to Jerusalem that they found Jesus in the temple (verses 45-49). When asked why he had done this thing, the boy Jesus replied, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (verse 49). This is like so many today in religion who walk their own way (Proverbs 14:12), and they suppose Jesus is with them merely because they are religious and have been discharging religious duties. Like Mary

and Joseph, there is a lot of searching that must be done to find the Lord. And where is he found? He is found exactly where you might expect! It is to be noted that Jesus was in fact "at home" when he was found! He was in his Father's house! Jesus hasn't moved; we are the ones who have moved and need to come back to see him.

The chief priests and scribes sought Jesus, but *theirs is the seeking that rises out of hatred*. "And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him. . ." (Luke 22:2). This intention was even voiced after Jesus had worked the great miracle in raising Lazarus from the grave. The fact that Jesus had wrought this wonderful things was not denied; in fact it was freely admitted by them (John 11:47)! So envious were they of Jesus' influence, though, that they "consulted that they might also put Lazarus to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (John 12:10, 11). This must truly be the height of spiritual hardening! They hated Jesus so much that they would do anything to rid themselves of him. This is still the tactic used by the enemies of the truth. If reason and argument fails, then they will do all they can to destroy your influence. How sad that such strategies are employed even by some in the church when they want to rid themselves of a sound gospel preacher or rid of a sound elder.

Those who benefited from Jesus' miracle of feeding the five thousand sought him out, but *theirs was the seeking of one who wants to receive instead of give*. When they found Jesus after seeking him (John 6:24, 25), Jesus told them, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (verse 26). Jesus warned them not to seek for things which are temporary but to seek for the eternal things (verse 27). Some today want the food, but not the fellowship of Jesus! They want to be Christians and enjoy church membership, but they don't want the obligations that go with it. They will find exactly what they seek for!

There were some Greeks who came up to a feast of the Jews with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20,21). Who these Greeks were no one knows for certain. What is certain is that their coming indicated that the time of the atoning death of Jesus was near (Verses 23-32). They must have come for a purpose, and there is every reason to believe

that it was a noble purpose. Whereas the Jews were soon to reject Jesus, the Gentiles would open their hearts to him. God speaks through Isaiah and declares, "I was found of them that sought me not" (Romans 10:20; Isaiah 65:1). Whoever these Gentiles were, they stepped over the barriers that would have kept them from seeing Jesus! Barriers of prejudice and error must be torn down in order to seek and find Jesus.

Are you seeking Jesus?

"It Is The World In Which We Live"

JASON R. ROBERTS

Paul Harvey tells us that in Maryland a young lady has to get parental consent to get her ears pierced, but the same young lady can have an abortion without mom and dad knowing about it. That is the world in which we live. In Pennsylvania, a young lady was sent home from school because of the T-shirt she was wearing. The front of the T-shirt said, "I AM A VIRGIN." Tragically, the back of the shirt read "THIS IS AN OLD SHIRT." That is the world in which we live. Thousands of schools all across the nation have taken down the Ten Commandments and have put up metal detectors as their replacement, and that too is the world in which we live. The world in which we live is a world that calls homosexuality a respectable lifestyle, while God calls it a repulsive lifestyle (Rom. 1:24-28, Jude 7). Things that were once considered an abomination are now deemed as "selected alternatives." Morality is now determined by the majority, yet Jesus said the majority will be lost (Matt. 7:13, 14, 21-23).

Years ago grass was something you mowed, today it is something you smoke. Coke was something you drank, today it is something you snort. Pot was something you cooked in, today it is something that is cooked and smoked. Rock and Roll music was a Grandma's lullaby, today's Rock music would "rock" Grandmother out of her chair and "roll" her into her grave. There was a time when aids were student helpers in the Principal's

office, today AIDS is a raging plague. This is the world in which we live.

It is a world in which the sanctity of human life is cheapened to the expression of "It's my choice," when years ago it was expressed as "It's my child!" It is a world that used to take care of the aged and the infirmed (James 1:27), but now under the tide of "mercy killing" we relieve their pain by giving them an injection, and many, if not most of them slip out into eternity where they have even greater pain! Ladies and gentlemen how long, Oh how long, will such injustice and rebellion persist? The truth of the matter is they know not God! Like the people of Hosea's day, our people are "*destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6). "*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel; for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn. . .*" (Hosea 4:1-3a). The word "*controversy*" literally means a lawsuit. Jehovah had a "lawsuit" against the nation of Israel. Has he taken one out on us?

We brag about our military defense and how powerful we are against the nations about US. But friends are you aware that at the hand of an Almighty God the smallest nation in the world could be destroyed? The nation of Israel came crashing down because of their sins. Will we go down in history as a people that forgot God and was laid to waste because of their wickedness? (Psalm 9:17). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their wickedness, were turned into a modern day ghosttown within hours, what about us? It is the inward corruption of a nation that is more harmful than its external enemies. "*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*" (Prov. 29:18). "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Keeping the Law is an INWARD characteristic of one's love for the Lord (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-5). Righteousness is an INWARD characteristic of one's holiness before the Lord (1 Pet. 1:15-16, 1 John 3:7).

If we want to turn our nation around, we are going to have to start focusing (vision) our attention on internal (righteousness) rather than just externals. We must get into the hearts and lives

of people and give them the "engrafted word, which is able to save our souls" (James 1:21). The gospel is able and powerful enough to slice a man's heart wide open (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12). The question is, are we taking the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) and giving it to them? The late brother Andrew Connally used to say, "let's take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and remember that God didn't give us a butter paddle to play with, and let's take the shield of faith, and remember that God doesn't want us to turn it upside down and build a flower planter out of it, and let's go to work for the Lord."

The world in which we live is a world fraught with confusion, yet it still has many righteous individuals, who are pursuing those things that are "true, honest, just pure, lovely and of good report" (Philip. 4:8) Remaining neutral, rather than voicing a concern, places one with the guilty (cf. Obadiah 11). We must get involved and come out of the dark and "let our lights shine" (Matt. 5:16) in a world of darkness, in a world destined for failure, in a world doomed for destruction.

Many of us have manifested the same attitude toward the word of God that the Romans did that Paul referred to in his letter to the church at Rome. Read carefully verses eighteen and following of the first chapter and notice that they FIRST left God doctrinally and then morally. They refused to **HONOR** God (v.21a), they refused to **ACKNOWLEDGE** God (v. 19, 21a), they refused to **THANK** God (v.21) and they **EXCHANGED** the truth of God for lie (v. 25) Observe the first letter of each of the above bold words, "Honor," "Acknowledge," "Thank," "Exchanged." It spells out very clearly their attitude toward the Lord, **HATE!** (v.30a) What was the result of their hatred toward God? *Foolishness* (v.22), *idolatry* (v.23,25), *homo-sexuality* (v. 24, 26-28), *unrighteousness*, *fornicators*, *wickedness*, *covetousness*, *maliciousness*, *full of envy*, *murder*, *debase*, *deceit*, *malignity*, *whisperers*, *backbiters*, *haters of God*, *despiteful*, *proud*, *boasters*, *inventors of evil things*, *disobedient to parents*, *without understanding*, *covenant breakers*, *without natural affection*, *implacable*, *unmerciful*" (v. 29-31). That was the world in which they lived, and ironically, it is the same world in which we are living in today!

The Sin of Jeroboam

G.F. RAINES

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel after the division of the kingdom (B.C. 982-961).

Jeroboam "devised of his own heart" a system of worship that deviated in many ways from the worship that God had authorized, and persuaded the ten tribes to accept it (1 Kings 12:25-33). Because of his presumption, Jeroboam is referred to as the king who caused Israel to sin (2 Kings 23:15).

Presumptuous (unauthorized) worship has always been an abomination in the sight of God.

Many acts of worship which are prevalent in the religious world are as presumptuous as the system of worship which Jeroboam originated; for example, the use of instrumental music, the burning of incense, and the use of "holy water." There is just as much authority in the New Testament for either of these innovations as there is for the others, and there is none for any of them!

The book of God plainly tells us that vocal music (singing) is the kind of music that God has authorized to be used in Christian worship. The apostle Paul says: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18, 19).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16).

The Holy Bible also says:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deut. 4:2).

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:5,6).

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him

in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

The sin of Jeroboam (presumption) is more widespread today than it was when Jeroboam was still living and active.

The psalmist David said:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psa. 19:7-13).

Did Jesus Turn Water Into Wine?

GLENN COLLEY

Occasionally some one who enjoys drinking beverage alcohol socially will argue his liberty to do so using John 2:1-11. This chapter records the first of Jesus' earthly miracles, the turning of water to wine. The argument is simply that Jesus authorized the moderate use of beverage alcohol for social reasons when He made this wine for the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

The text says, "And the third day there was a marriage in

Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. when the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk then that which is worse: *but thou hast kept the good wine until now.* (John 2:1-11)."

Jesus turned water into wine. Some have gone to great lengths to discuss methods of fermentation and the possible alcohol content of the wine, and that is an interesting study. But that still does not hit the nail on the head. The real question is this: *Did Jesus make an intoxicating beverage for that feast?* The answer is, certainly not!

Keep in mind that the Greek word for wine in the chapter is *oinos*. While we generally think of all wine as intoxicating beverage, the word "wine" in the Bible can represent either an intoxicating or non-intoxicating beverage. The context must reveal the meaning. It is clear that some wine in the Old Testament is fresh grape juice and nothing more. Consider the word wine (Hebrew, *Tiyrowsh*) in these passages: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Proverbs 3:10) "Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." (Isaiah 65:8).

Now back to the question. It is clear that Jesus turned barrels full of water into wine at a marriage feast. The guests had already consumed a substantial quantity of the host's wine at the time. Was that intoxicating wine? If so, and they were filled with

it, then we must assume they were at least somewhat intoxicated. Was that the kind of festive scene before Mary's eyes when the "handmaiden" of the Lord asked Jesus to get more wine for the guests? Certainly not.

Furthermore, if the wine created by Jesus was an intoxicating beverage, consider the quantity. Jesus didn't make a few dainty airline bottles to hand out. He made barrels. If that wine was indeed an intoxicating beverage, Jesus was clearly encouraging that group to become as intoxicated as they liked. Would Jesus help people get drunk?

John 2 does not support the "moderate" drinker's contention that "social drinking is acceptable because Jesus turned water into wine." Jesus, who kept the Old law perfectly without sin, knew what the Bible said in Proverbs 23 about intoxicating beverages. "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For he drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty . . . Who hath woe? who hath *sorrow*? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. (Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-35).

Hear what Jesus teaches about those who would encourage others to sin: "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (Luke 17:1-3).

Jesus did not turn water into an intoxicating beverage. Mary did not ask Jesus to give people barrels of intoxicating beverage. She asked Him for sweet grape juice, and our Lord furnished the guests with that drink.



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