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THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 30

April 2000

No. 12

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“Judge not, that you be not judged”

What does this mean? Should we not point out any wrong or sin? Should we not speak out when one is living in sin and doing things ungodly? In fact, in the same chapter of Matthew 7, from where the above cited verse 1 is quoted, in verse number 15 Christ warned: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” In calling such preachers and teachers, who preach and teach false doctrines, “false prophets” and ravenous wolves,” was Christ judging them? Yes, He was, indeed But He was judging them rightly. What did Christ mean then, when He said “Judge not, that you be not judged?” To understand a certain teaching or passage from the Bible, one must read the whole context or the case of the matter before drawing a conclusion. So, lets read from Matthew 7:1-5.

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” said Christ, “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And, why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or, how can you say to your brother, “Let me remove the speck out of your eye,” and look, a plank is

in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

What is a speck? Its a very tiny or small spot. What is a plank? A plank is a very thick board. So what was Christ teaching, when He spoke "Judge not, that you be not judged"? Christ was teaching that if one is wrong, sinful, in error, then he should correct himself first, before pointing such things in others. For example, some parents smoke, or drink or gamble, but then when they found out that their own children are beginning to do same things they rebuke them and get angry at them. They don't see the plank first in their own eyes! When one is lying and cheating and using cursing and abusive language, then he has no right to condemn others for doing the same. This is not to say that such things are right. But we must take out every wrong thing from our own lives first, before we begun to find fault in others.

The same will be true in religious or spiritual matters also. Christ said of some, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying: These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:7-9). Christ condemned them and judged them wrong because they were worshipping God in ways and manners He has not specified. They were teaching and observing as doctrines the commandments of men.

The Apostle Paul did the same, when he found out that Christians at Corinth were dividing themselves into various denominational sects. He said, "Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Was Paul judging them? Was he telling them that they were wrong? Yes, he sure was. And he had every right to say that. Because

he knew, that there was only one Christ, in whose name he was baptized (Acts 22:16), and that He built only one church (Matthew 16:18), of which Paul was a member (Acts 2:47). He was a Christian and a member of the church which was called after the name of Christ. He knew he was right.

Who Is A "Pentecostal"?

J.C. CHOATE

We are living in a strange world. Many believers in Christ call themselves "Pentecostals," but nowhere in the Bible can you read of a "Pentecostal"! If you look up the word in a complete concordance, you will not find it listed even once!

In error, these people have taken the name of the Jewish feast day—Pentecost—on which the Lord's church was established, and they have called themselves and their church after that holiday. God never intended such a thing.

Yes, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles on the day of Pentecost, as Christ had promised, and the church was begun on that day, but the people were not "Pentecostals" and the church was not the "Pentecostal Church." Rather, the disciples were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26), and the church also wore the name of Christ, "... for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; Romans 16:16). Those who would call themselves "Pentecostal" have not paid close attention to the Scriptural use of these names.

Neither have they paid close attention to other truth regarding the events of that day. They noted the words "Holy Spirit," "tongues," "miracles," and they have built their own doctrines with the use of these words.

□ Through the years they have divided into numerous groups, calling themselves by many different names, yet all claim to be led by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. They have overlooked the fact that God is not the author of confusion and division (1 Corinthians 1:10; 14:33; Romans 16:17), and that, as one of the Persons of the Godhead, the Holy

Spirit cannot be a party to religious division or the wearing of unscriptural names.

□ **They see that the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and so they teach that all believers receive the same baptism.** They teach people to pray for this baptism. They overlook the fact that all the penitent believers on the day of Pentecost were told to be baptized in water (Acts 2:38; 8:36), and that not a single soul in the Scriptures was ever taught to pray for "Holy Spirit baptism." Even the designation is not written in that way in the Scriptures!

□ **They teach that people should speak "in tongues" today; that it is a heavenly language which only God, or some "inspired interpreter" understands.** They overlook the fact that Acts 2:8 says concerning the "tongues" spoken by the apostles, ". . . are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

□ **They teach that people today can perform miracles, like the apostles did, because they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, as the apostles were.** They overlook the fact that, though the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost to all those who were baptized in water for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; 5:32), Acts 5:12 says that it was "through the hands of the apostles [that] many signs and wonders were done among the people!"

It was not until certain brethren (already "filled with the Holy Spirit [Acts 6:3] but not able to perform miracles) were chosen for the special gifts conferred through prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 6:6) that these additional men were able to perform miracles (v.8). Throughout the New Testament, only those few chosen people, who had been given special gifts through the apostles were able to do miracles (Acts 8:18; 1 Corinthians 12).

They teach that all who have faith should experience the miraculous; the ability to do miracles, to speak in "tongues," to be healed by miracles, to be "blessed" with the material things they desire, through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. They overlook the fact that physical and material wealth were never promised Christians, nor is material wealth of any concern to the Holy Spirit. Nor was miraculous healing promised to

Christians! Miracles were used in the first century to make believers (Mark 16:20), not to heal believers! Timothy had stomach problems (1 Timothy 5:23), Paul had a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7), Trophimus was left in Miletus sick (2 Timothy 4:20), Ephroditus was sick right unto death (Philippians 2:27)—yet the power of the Holy Spirit was not used to heal believers in any of these cases! The Pentecostals make many doctrines and claims, but most of them contradict the Scriptures!

We must realize that if the Pentecostal people were actually functioning and teaching by the power of the Holy Spirit, there would be no contradictions on these many points with what is already recorded and confirmed in the Scriptures. The Lord's church is not "Pentecostal"; His people do not wear the name "Pentecostal;" we do not teach and practice doctrines that are contrary to the New Testament. While we understand that every Christian has been made alive to God through the Holy Spirit, who came to dwell in us from the time of our baptism into the death, body, and church of Christ (Romans 6:3-6; 8:11), we realize that His miraculous work ended with the confirmation of the completed New Testament.

Especially For Women

Jesus—The Christ *Part 5*

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"One thing I don't understand," Rachel said as they began their evening study. "If our salvation cost Christ so much more than His death on the cross, *why is His death such a focal point in the Scriptures?* Why is not the change in His relationship with God and with man not emphasized more?"

"Now that we've begun to understand, we've actually found many, many Scriptures explaining the various aspects of that very point," answered Andrew. "You know we've found that on every subject there seems to be ever increasing depths of revelation—so that those who hunger and thirst for truth can

continue to grow and never exhaust the riches of His word. On the cost of our very salvation, really it's enough to know that he died for us, because to the typical human mind, death is the thing most feared, the greatest price He could pay. Knowledge that He paid that price gives security. But, in continuing to study, we've seen deeper truths, and there will yet be more to learn. The beauty of God's truth is that one part of knowledge never contradicts another. Whatever we learn will only deepen our understanding of Him and His love.

"But maybe there's another reason His death is stressed, Rachel. It was in His dying that we were saved from spiritual death and eternal separation from God. And, YES! It was in His death that he took our sins! in His death that, as 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains, ' . . . He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'

"THAT'S THE KEY!" Andrew almost shouted. "That's it!" Just as death is the wage of sin for humans, it was in death that Christ took our sins as His own. That's why He agonized so much in the Garden of Gethsemane—not that He was afraid of dying, but that He KNEW that when He took our sins, He would be forever bound to us, and the change in the relationship in the Godhead would be *eternal!*"

"Yes, He did say to Peter in the Garden that if He asked the Father, God would send legions of angels to save Him from arrest, so at that point He *could have* turned back," reasoned Rachel.

"But if He *had* turned back—if He'd gone back to the equality He'd had from eternity—if He hadn't actually taken our sins and died for them—none of us could be saved. But after He had been '*made sin*,' it was like buying something and paying a price for it; He couldn't take back the cost. If He keeps us with Him eternally, the price for our souls is that equality He held with God. Really, I can't think of any verse in the New Testament which states or even suggests anything different," Andrew said, thoughtfully.

"And you've answered my question!" exclaimed Rachel. "If His death was the binding point with humanity—the point when He took our sins—then it's logical that His death also be the focal point in our learning about salvation."

"And, another thing!" Andrew almost shouted again. That's

why **baptism** is such a focal point! Because it's where we meet **His death**, and it's the **binding point** for us, too! Before baptism, a person can turn away from Christ. But *through baptism* we not only are washed in His blood but, according to John 3:5, we are *born* into the family of God. And though our failure to live for God might cause us to be disinherited, we can't be *unborn*!

"Well, of course!" Rachel agreed. "So baptism is very much more than the 'ritual' some people think it is! Andrew, what exciting truths we're learning!"

"That brings up another 'ritual', as some people would label it: the Lord's Supper. Why would God make a memorial supper such a focal point of worship? I think I understand, now. Not only is the Supper a weekly reminder to us of the price paid for our salvation— "... *This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*" "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:25,26). So the Supper is a memorial to *us*, but as we partake of it week after week, we are also continually reminding any *on-lookers* of His death!"

"Verse 28 makes a full circle of the meaning of the Supper," Rachel said. "Look at the parallels that continue: His **death** was the binding point, when He was made sin for us and we were made the righteousness of God in Him. **Baptism** is our answer to His death, our binding point with Him, when we lay our sins on Him and are covered in His righteousness. The **Supper** turns our minds back to His death, but then in verse 28 we're instructed, "*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*" So, while we're remembering what our salvation cost Him, we're also looking into our own hearts and checking our manner of life! That means that, week by week, we should be renewing our commitment to God and to Christ, before we eat of the Supper."

"What a beautiful picture!" Andrew concluded. "How could anyone who understands these truths ever doubt God's love or question anything He asks us to do?"

Strange 'Gospel'

FRANCIS DAVID

According to the Scriptures we have only one gospel to preach. This gospel of Jesus Christ was preached by Paul and he claimed that he received this gospel through the revelation of Jesus. The Christians in Galatia, were now turning to some other gospel and Paul was shocked to see this. He writes to them saying: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a *different gospel*, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before so now I say again; if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Gal.1:6-9). In Paul's days many Jews were converted to Christianity but after some time they started turning away from the true gospel to the Judaism again. They were trying to make this gospel strange and different. They were binding some legal systems of Judaism on the Christians. Paul had to tell them that they should remain abide in the doctrine of Christ. But some of those people started paying attention to their Jews teachers and leaders and deserted the true gospel. Paul told them, what you have done is wrong, and if we or an angel come from heaven give you another 'strange' 'different' gospel, let him be accursed.

In our world today, there are many false gospels are being preached by men. There are many false preachers today who are preaching all kinds of gospel which they have prepared according to their own thinking and philosophy. We can make a list of things which are being taught in the name of Christianity but they are strange and different then what the Bible says. We need to watch and be careful what we are accepting in the name of Christianity. The Bible, inspired word of God says: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1). Friends, we must try, test and prove what we accept religiously. Apostel Paul telling the Christians at

Theslonica: "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (I Thess. 5:21). We must test the doctrines and teachings before we accept them.

God's book tells us that there is only one Church which Jesus built. (Matt. 16:18), and He is the head of the church, (Col. 1:18). But what we hear today, according to strange gospel, church could be Catholic or protestant. The true gospel is that church is neither catholic nor protestant. All those who are in the Lord's church or church of Christ are called Christians (Acts. 11:26,26:28) They are not called Catholics, Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Sevenday Adventist, or Jesus Only group and so on. There is no end to the list. There are hundreds of denominations existing in the world, and all claim to be following the one gospel, but actually they are not because all these names are foreign to the Bible. There is another strange gospel, that is being preached by a number of people. According to this strange gospel, a man is saved by faith only. Whereas the Bible tells us that faith without works is dead (James 2:14). Jesus very plainly and clearly says in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Now how do we see these words of Jesus? Does Jesus say that one has to be baptised, in order to be saved? Worlds of people say no, they say baptism is not important and therefore it is not required for salvation. But let us see what apostle Peter says: "There is also an anti type which now saves us, namely *baptism* (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but answer of good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (I Pet. 3:21). Same Peter tells the crowd on the day of Pentecost when these people heard the gospel, he says: "Repent and let everyone of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; . . . (Acts 2:38). Some people are making this statement of Peter controversial, these people project themselves as 'Jesus only group'. They say: "If you are not baptised in the name of Jesus only then your baptism is not right. "According to them, God's name is Jesus and therefore we should be baptised only in Jesus name. In Matthew chapter 28 verses 18 & 19, Where Jesus said that: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." By this authority He said now I tell you: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the

name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We understand here that one has to be baptised with the authority of Jesus, whether he is baptised in the name of Jesus or in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We know that Jesus has been given this authority from his Father, and He is going to give back this authority to his Father. Let us read what Paul says: "For God has put all things in subjection under his feet" But He also says, "All things are put in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one." (I Cor. 15:27-28). Beware of false doctrine.

There is another false doctrine prevailing in this world. According to this doctrine, only 144,000 persons will go to heaven. What do we read in Rev. 7:9 "...A great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb (Jesus), with white robes and palms in their hands." We see here that multitude of people will be saved and not just 144,000. Many false preachers set the dates of Jesus return. But the Bible says: "No man knows when Jesus will come back. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Another doctrine that we hear today is this that Jesus will come on this earth and set up his kingdom and live here for 1000 years. The Bible says: "In the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; *the earth also*, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." When all this will be destroyed then where he would establish his kingdom? The false preaches are teaching that the idea of Godhead is from Satan and they say there is no trinity or Godhead. The word of God plainly says: "For there are three that bear witness (record) in heaven, the Father, the word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (I John 5:7, Col. 2:9-10) The word trinity is not found in the Bible but Godhead is there. Your Bible teaches it and you must accept it. Friends, we are not against religious people, but we want you to investigate and find for yourselves the truth. Let the truth prevail. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." We love you but we oppose the error. There are many other strange gospels preached by the people that we are not able to discuss now, because of lack of

space but it would be good to study your Bible and compare these false teachings with the Word of God. Paul writes to Timothy by saying "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, Rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). When we will rightly handle the Bible, there is no doubt we will not accept the strange different gospel. Right now, you can accept the one true gospel. You can become a plain, simple, Christian. Believe in Jesus. Confess HIM, repent of your past sinful life and be baptised. (John 8:32; Rom. 10:10; Luke 13:3; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4). After you become a Christian it would be your duty to teach and preach the one true gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Object Of True Worship

NORMAN FIELDS

In Mtt. 4:10 as Jesus faced the temptations of the evil one, He was shown all the kingdoms of the world and their glories. Satan told Jesus that he would give Him these glories if Jesus would fall down and worship him. In response to this Jesus told the adversary he was not the proper object of worship. There is only one object of true worship, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve." This statement of our Lord is a quote from Deut. 10:20. In this Old Testament passage Moses uses a plural word for God (*elohim*) referring to the Divine Nature or Godhead (Acts 17:29) In Mtt. 4:10 Jesus uses the Greek equivalent (*theos*), the same word used by Paul in Acts 17:29 and translated "Divine Nature" or "Godhead." This shows that the object of our worship is the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). However, in Jn. 4:23 Jesus says that our worship must be directed toward the Father, ". . . true worshipers will worship the Father . . ." How is it that the three Persons of the Godhead are worshiped while directing our worship toward only one of the Three, the Father, directly? Paul answers the question for us in Eph. 2:18, "For through Him [Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Here we see that we worship God by approaching the Father through Jesus (or in Christ, Rom. 6:3-4)

by the Spirit (by the guidance or direction of the Spirit, Phil. 3:3). The only way to worship the Father in spirit and truth is for our worship to be offered in Christ (the worshiper must be in Christ) and according to the direction of the Holy Spirit (more about this as we look into the third element of Jn. 4:24, the proper standard—truth). That is to say that all three Persons of the Godhead are active in true worship.

To give worship to any other object is to engage in vain, or empty, worship. Jesus said that true worshipers would worship the Father (Jn. 4:23). That is to say that those who direct their worship toward any thing or person other than God the Father are false worshipers. For example, in Jer. 10:3-5 Jeremiah discusses an object of vain worship in idolatry. He points out the futility of worshiping these things made by men's hands by showing how they are totally void of any power of their own. He says that these idols have to be nailed down to keep them from falling over because they don't have the power to stand up on their own. He says that they have no power to speak. They have to be carried because they don't have the power to move about on their own. They have no power to discern between good and evil, in other words they are mindless. Why should one give their worship to such a powerless object? But Jeremiah goes on to say who does have the power, "there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great **in might**)." He says because God is the one with the power the worship of men is His "rightful due." How sad it is to see men bowing down to an object that has no power to reward them for their devotion, that doesn't even have the ability to know that it is being worshiped. Its a block of wood, a rock, a lump of clay, that has no power to even keep itself upright. The crafting of men's hands are not a proper object of true worship.

Likewise, neither is a man an object of true worship. In Acts 10:25-26 the apostle Peter had been summoned to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius had been instructed by an angel to send for Peter so that he might hear the will of God. Upon seeing the great apostle approaching Cornelius fell down and worshiped him. Look at Peter's reaction to Cornelius' worship, "Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." Peter was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He had walked with the Lord for over three years and had been taught by Him personally. Out of all

the apostles Peter was one of those who were closest to Jesus. Peter was the one who had preached the sermon that opened the Christian Age (Acts 2). He was one of only twelve men in the world that could bestow spiritual gifts. But even in light of all this Peter was just a man and not worthy of the worship of men. Even though Peter possessed the power of God, he was not God. He would not accept what belonged only to God. In the same way another apostle rejected the worship of men when offered. In Acts 14:14-15 the apostle Paul and Barnabas were speaking to the people of Lystra. During the course of their message the apostle Paul, in order to prove that they were speaking by the power of God, healed a man that was crippled. Seeing this the people said that "the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" They began to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. Unlike many men today who readily accept the worship of men, Paul and Barnabas were greatly distressed. They "tore their cloths and ran among the multitude crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you." How remarkable! A man with the kind of power that Paul had saying that he was a man with the same nature as me. If a man with that kind of power; a man that gave his life to the cause of Christ, a man that spent his life serving others; is not worthy of worship then what kind of man is? What can a man do to become worthy of worship? The apostles Peter and Paul knew that, although men can do many admirable things, there is nothing they can do to be worthy of worship. Only God is worthy of worship and, therefore, man can never be the object of true worship.

The apostle John shows us yet another improper object of worship. In Rev. 19:10 as John is receiving the revelation of Jesus Christ he is overcome by the presence of the mighty angel (18:21) that he fell down and worshiped him. This mighty angel of heaven, this being created to serve the Most High God, this creature that was one of the mighty host of heaven. No wonder John was overcome with the desire to worship one so magnificent. But look at what the angel said to John's worship, "But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!" This mighty angel knew his place. He did not want John's worship. He became angry with John and

demanded that such should not be done. The angel was created just like John was, and for the same reason—to serve God. He knew what the proper object of worship was for he told John, “Worship God!” But this angel must have been a truly remarkable being because even after this strong rebuke John again falls down to worship the mighty angel (Rev. 22:18) and again the same rebuke is given, “See that you do not do that!” How the angels of heaven must cry seeing the people of the world today offering up their prayers to their, so-called, “guardian angels.” The angels don’t want our worship, they want us to worship the same One they worship, the one true God. They know that there is only one proper object of true worship and its not idols or men or angels.

Let us all turn our attention to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and give Him the worship that only He deserves. Let us all worship God in spirit and truth through Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

“What Is Hell?”

MIKE BENSON

Mr. Benson,

“What do the scriptures teach about hell?”

While hell is not a pleasant subject to contemplate, it is a part of biblical teaching. A study of this matter ought to serve as ample motivation to righteous living. Jesus warns, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:27).

1. Hell is a prepared place. Jesus said, “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

2. Hell is a permanent place. Daniel wrote, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). “And these will go away into everlasting

punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (II Thessalonians 1:9). "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:11). See also Matthew 18:8; Mark 9:45-46.

3. Hell is a place of punishment. John revealed, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:49-50). "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). See also Romans 2:5-11; Hebrews 10:29; II Peter 2:9.

Called Out Of Darkness Into His Marvelous Light

B.J. CLARKE

Have you ever considered what it would be like to be completely blind? Can you imagine living in total darkness? It is unfortunate that many in our world are afflicted with this impairment. They have never seen the beautiful sunrise and sunset. They have never witnessed the colors of God's creation: the bright red cardinal, green meadows, deep blue skies, bright yellow sunshine, rainbows, autumn leaves, etc. They have never beheld the rolling hills and majestic mountains that adorn God's splendid creation. They have never shared in the warmth of a human smile, an expressive gleam in one's eyes or the beauty of a wedding bride. How blessed we are to have our sight! Our gratitude should be expressed to God daily!

On at least five specific occasions in the New Testament,

our Lord Jesus healed the physically blind and called them out of a world of darkness into a marvelous world of light (Matthew 9:27-31, 12:22, 20:29-34, Mark 8:22f, John 9:1-41). Can you imagine being in a state of total darkness and suddenly having your eyes opened to a flood of light? What immense joy those whom Jesus healed must have felt! We pray that all who are bound in a world of darkness might someday be loosed from this bondage to enjoy the world of light. Physical blindness is indeed a tragedy.

Although difficult to imagine, the Bible speaks of a type of blindness far more tragic than physical blindness. It is spiritual blindness. Paul said that Satan had blinded the minds of the lost so that the glorious light of the gospel would not shine through unto them (II Corinthians 4:4). Peter said that Christians who lacked the "Christian graces" were blind (II Peter 1:9). John said that he who hates his brother is in darkness that hath blinded his eyes (I John 2:11). God's word often depicts those in spiritual darkness as stumbling and groping for direction (Proverbs 4:19, Jeremiah 23:12, Isaiah 59:10, John 11:10, 12:35f). At one time or another all of us have been spiritually blinded and living in darkness. Those who are in darkness need a source of light. The Scriptures reveal at least three sources of light available to us in this dark world.

(1) **GOD IS LIGHT**—Several scriptures attest to this fact. David said, "For thou art my lamp, O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness" (II Samuel 22:29). David restated this idea in several of his psalms (Psalm 18:28, 27:1, 36:9, 118:27). The beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus stated the idea quite clearly when he wrote, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5b). The Greek language in this passage is quite dogmatic. John uses two negatives to signify that not even one tiny particle, not one speck or spot of darkness can be found in the pure light which flows from the character of God. The sum total of God's divine character is seen in the world "light." Christians have been called out of darkness to walk in his marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). Once we come into fellowship with God we can no longer walk in darkness (I John 1:6). To maintain our fellowship with God we must continue to walk in the light (I John 1:7f).

(2) **JESUS IS LIGHT**—The same John who wrote that God

the Father is light, affirmed the same thing about God the Son. In the first chapter of his gospel he noted that John the Baptizer bore witness of the light, that all men through him might believe (John 1:5-9). Later in this same book, Jesus proclaimed that he is the light of whom John wrote, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12). A short time later he stated, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"* (John 9:5). Jesus came into this world to provide a source of light to those who were groping in spiritual darkness. Those who would accept the light and follow it's guidance would be delivered out of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13, I Peter 2:9).

(3) THE WORDS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE LIGHT—

"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8b). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path..." "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:105, 130). "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:" (Proverbs 6:23). These passages plainly show that the words of the Holy Spirit, recorded infallibly by holy men of God, provide guidance and light to the sinner lost in darkness and to the child of God wishing to maintain fellowship with God. This is precisely why Satan, the god of this world, works so hard to blind the minds of unbelievers. Paul said that Satan blinds minds "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4). Satan is well aware of the power that resides within the words of the Holy Spirit to give off more than enough light to dispel the gloomy darkness of his domain. He knows that the words of the Spirit light the pathway to an eternal home with God in heaven. His mission is to keep people in darkness and thus, eternally lost. However, that mission has been thwarted by the providence of the three sources of light we have already discussed. God, Christ and the Spirit's words have made it possible for all to be called out of darkness into marvelous light.

Truth Or Tradition ?

DENNIS GULLEDGE

Tradition has the primary meaning of handing over to another; delivery, or transfer. This delivery includes the oral transmission of information or instruction, passed down from one generation to another. Webster says it is, "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom.)"

The word "tradition," as it is used in the Bible, carries with it the above meaning. It denotes the teachings of the Rabbis and their interpretations of the Law of Moses as handed down by them. For example, after the giving of the Law of Moses on Mt. Sinai the Jewish Rabbis deduced from the general principles of the Law what they considered to be their proper application. As the years passed other astute scholars felt that the interpretations of the earlier Rabbis needed additional enlightenment. On down the line others assumed the same liberty of explaining the explanations of explanation. And so, by the time Christ came on the scene there was a stupendous mass of traditional material to which the Jews were answerable, much of it regarded with equal or greater authority than the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. This interpretative material is known as the Targums of the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. The Chaldean Targum on the book of Ruth, "We are commanded to keep 613 precepts." F.F. Bruce, in a comment on this says, "The Rabbis calculated that the Law consisted of 613 precepts; 365 being negative (one for every day of the year), and 248 being positive (one for every part of the body)." Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus said to the Pharisees that they made void the commandment of God by their traditions? (Mark 7:6-9).

A tradition is not wrong just because it is a tradition. A tradition is wrong when, and if, it is exalted to equal God's way. We are strongly controlled by some traditions that are not wrong in themselves. For example, as pertaining to our order of worship in churches of Christ, brethren, in places, are accustomed to a certain pattern of doing things. If you disturb that pattern you will certainly disturb some people. But, the Bible does not give any

command from God as to the Order of our worship services. We have commands from God as to *what* we are to engage in (prayer, singing, Lord's Supper, giving), but, no word as to the arrangement in which these things are to be engaged in. There are some among us who clamor for a change in these traditions. But, for some their clamor doesn't stop there.

There is another line of thought in which we need to pursue this matter of tradition. I notice, of late, that the words "tradition" and "traditional" are commonly used by the liberals among us to place a long-held belief or doctrine in an unfavourable light. For example, an elder in the Lord's church has within recent years written a book in which he challenges "the traditional view of hell," and sets out to defend annihilationism; the very doctrine espoused by Jehovah's Witnesses. Never mind the fact that this view has been answered in debate for many years, and proven false and untenable, but the day has now dawned among churches of Christ, when false teachers among us can take advantage of an untaught generation and advocate any denominational dogma they please, and find it well accepted by many.

It seems that some of the "scholars" in our schools and the preachers in our prestigious pulpits are stepping out to challenge what they label as "traditional views" on subjects ranging from eternal punishment of the wicked to marriage-divorce and remarriage, to instrumental music in the worship, to women serving as deacons, to . . . you name it! The voices of concern in the current liberal movement are calling for us to give up our hidebound traditions in these and other areas.

Now, I am certainly not averse to re-studying a belief or an opinion, but what if a so-called "traditional view" happens to be the correct view. If a belief is labeled as a tradition, should that prejudice our minds? No doubt some would like to have it so. Perhaps that is why the word "tradition" is bandied about the way it is these days. It is now a scare word. The liberals throw it around and attach it to whatever they want, and in their minds it has the effect of the scarlet letter.

Please consider the following oft repeated claim: "The Bible does not say that instrumental music in Christian worship is wrong. It is the only Church of Christ tradition that says so." What's so wrong with that statement? First, it fails to

acknowledge the silence of the Scriptures in determining what God approves, or disapproves in Christian worship. A person will do one of two things with silence of the Scriptures: One, he will view it as allowing him to do anything that is not expressly condemned, as Martin Luther did, and the Christian Church still does, or, two, he will view it as limiting his actions to only that which the New Testament authorizes, either by express command, approved example, or necessary inference. Any person holding the first point of view will fail to see how a thing may be wrong even if there is no express condemnation in Scripture.

Second, it fails to recognize the law of exclusion in Biblical hermeneutics. That is, where the Bible includes a thing in keeping with God's will, it necessarily excludes anything that would incorporate something of another "kind" into the worship. For example, the Bible does not say we can't use Coca Cola and cornbread on the Lord's table. Why don't we do it? The reason is that the Bible includes what is to be on the Lord's table (unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine), [1 Corinthians 11:23-29, Cf., Matthew 26:17-29] and that excludes anything else of another kind. Very simple, yet some will argue that we inconsistently use songbooks in our singing to which "our tradition" finds no objection. The reason is elementary: with song books you still sing as God commanded, and nothing else. With instrumental accompaniment you interject another "kind" of music (mechanical) into the worship aside from the only kind for which we have Scriptural authorization (vocal).

Third, it carelessly gives consent to the worn out expression "Church of Christ tradition," and confuses a matter of truth with custom. We need to be very careful of what we stick that "T" word label on.

Tradition is not necessarily bad. That which is handed down may be bad, and contrary to God's will, or it may be good, and worthy of perpetuation. A tradition as such may be neither good nor bad, such as the "two songs and a prayer" custom. But, if we "transgress the commandment of God" by our traditions, then it deserves an immediate rejection without a moment's deliberation (Cf. Matthew 15:3; Mark 7:8). The eternal truth of God is that which the apostles received of God, and through inspired writings have handed down to us. Paul said, "Therefore,

brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (II Thessalonians 2:15). it's an easy thing to scoff at truth and call it tradition. Let us not be misled by those who do so.

"I'm A Young Person Can You Help Me?"

ALLEN WEBSTER

"I am at a difficult time in my life. You see, I struggle to be independent without being rebellious. I want to do the right thing, but it is not always clear what that is. I long to be a good example to my friends, but I also want to fit in with my peers. I enjoy Christianity, but the world's pull is strong."

As A Young Person I Need For You To . . .

"ENCOURAGE ME." You may not remember what it was like to be a teenager, but it is a discouraging time. Teenagers are very hard on themselves. When I make a mistake, I tend to make too much out of it. What I need is for the adults whom I respect to speak words of cheer and give me a pat on the back for the things I do well. I need to know that all people make mistakes.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:30-31). Paul wrote, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).

"TEACH ME" Yes, even though I sometimes act like I know everything, I realize that I am still learning! The greatest need I have is to learn the Bible. The basic truths which you have known for years, I still do not know. I want to know when I will be old enough to be baptized. I long to know what Christ wants me to do with my life. How does He expect me to act? What is right and what is wrong?

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking

heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:9-11). Solomon wrote the Proverbs, in part, to give "young men knowledge and discretion" (1:4).

"SHOW ME" I appreciate your instructions, but I find it easier to follow your example. Your life is a better teacher than your lips. What I really want are role models. When I *see* adults adorning the Gospel of Christ, it is easier to understand what the precepts mean. When I see the importance you place on worshipping God and studying His word, it motivates me to be interested. When you sacrifice to live right, it does not bother me so much when you ask me to sacrifice.

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). Jesus faced a young man who asked, "What lack I yet?" to which He responded, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:20-21). Jesus taught the lesson on priorities and exemplified how it applied.

"CORRECT ME" You did not expect to see this one, did you!? I act as if discipline were the curse of my life, but it is important to me. It shows that you care about me. I need boundaries set. I must know the difference between right and wrong, truth and error, good and bad. I will test you here. I am curious and want to know what lies outside the boundaries you have set for me. If you remain steadfast in your restrictions; then I will understand your conviction and see it as love for me.

The Proverbs say, "Withhold not correction from the child . . ." (23:13); "Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (22:15); "He that spareth his rod hateth his son but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (13:24).

Thank you for blessing my life and helping me through this difficult time.

Have You Ever Suffered For Jesus' Sake?

ELWOOD HOLT

I am wondering if sorrow has entered the home of some who are reading this? If so, you do not stand alone. If death came only to our households we could charge God with being unfair. But it is no respecter of persons. It strikes the men of both high and low degree.

Have you ever stopped to think of the spiritual condition of our world today? Though we are making some progress in the right direction, we are crippled by unfaithfulness and spiritual laziness on all hands. Unconcern seems to be typical of the average person. "I just don't have time," is the pet excuse of the twentieth century. Do you suppose a good strong persecution would snap us out of our lethargy? Someone said; "Persecutions are beneficial to the righteous. They are a hail of precious stones." Another said, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the kingdom." Satan's biggest mistake is always made when he goes all out to persecute God's people. He is cutting his own throat, but it seems that he has to learn his lesson all over again ever so often.

Persecution brings people together, fortifies them, and together, fortifies them, and promotes unity. In unity there is strength. The greatness in many is never seen until the waters are troubled. Sure, men have come through the furnace of adversity. Some men are never appreciated for their strength until they are called upon to manifest it.

The Church of the Lord did not come to us on a silver platter. The disciples who tried to walk in the steps of Jesus as he led them throughout the Bible land, did not have things easy. They did not have the luxuries of life that we have. They had no homes of their own. They roved about, slept under the heavens with the clouds as their comforts. They were the constant object of the persecution of the blasphemers of their day. The Church of Jerusalem got off to a big beginning on the day of Pentecost. Thousands of souls were added by obedience to the Lord. But the Jerusalem church became complacent. The members got

lazy. They lost what vision they had. When vision perishes, the people perish too. We will never rise any higher than our personal vision. Let us remember this and never succumb to the spirit of defeatism. With the Lord helping, we can do all things for His cause. No, the disciples did not have things easy. They suffered and finally a bunch of ugly, vicious men put him to a shameful death. He arose the third day and went back to heaven. But, His worthy apostles had to face an unfriendly world for a number of years before they could go on to be with him whom they had learned to love above all life. How did they die? Tradition says they died in these manners:

Matthew, slain with a sword in Ethiopia. Mark, dragged through the streets of Alexandria, Egypt, "till he expired." Luke, hanged on an olive tree in Greece; John, put in boiling oil in Rome, but escaped death die naturally at Ephesus, Asia. James, the great, was beheaded at Rome. James, the less, thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, then beaten to death with a club. Philip hanged up against a pillar in Phrygia. Andrew, bound to a cross where he preached until he expired. Thomas was run through the body with a lance. Bartholomew, flayed alive; Jude, shot to death with arrows, Matthias, stoned, then beheaded. Simon, crucified in Persia, and Paul, the last and one "chosen out of due season" beheaded out of Rome.

And then we think we have suffered for Jesus' sake: Oh, we should rise above excuses! Pitiful, frail creatures making excuses for neglect of God's will! We should pray, "DEAL MERCIFULLY WITH OUR UNBELIEF, O LORD!"

These words should make the church mean more to us than it did when we began. How great our faith should be—we who are so abundantly blessed. We should never forsake the Lord's house. And, remember, most of the work of this world is done by people who don't "FEEL WELL!" Jesus said, "YE SHALL SEEK ME, AND SHALL NOT FIND ME: AND WHERE I AM THITHER YE CANNOT COME" John 7:34. Jesus also said, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, IF A MAN KEEP MY SAYINGS, HE SHALL NEVER SEE DEATH" John 8:51. It pays to study the Holy book.



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Printed and Published by Sunny David on behalf of Church of Christ, New Delhi and Printed at : Print India A 38/2, Mayapuri, I, New Delhi-110064. Editor : Sunny David.

Licence to Post without Prepayment of Postage

No. U/SE/25/2000

Posted at New Delhi PSO on 10/11 April, 2000

Delhi Postal Regn. No. DL-11262/2000

Regd. No. 26921/71

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