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THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 31

July 2000

No. 3

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"God . . . has in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

Man is God's creation. According to the Bible, in His image and after His likeness did God create man in the beginning. (Genesis 1: 26, 27). Man is a spiritual being, like God, and will live forever, spiritually. Like God, man in the beginning was sinless, pure, and holy, just as a little baby is born without sin. Man, however, sinned by his own choice, and thus separated himself from God.

God, however, loves man. He continued to speak to man, persuading him to obey His will and come back to Him. The writer of the book of Hebrews says, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in the time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. . . ." (Hebrews 1: 1, 2).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was with Him when in the beginning man was created. Therefore, said God, "Let us make man in our image." (Gen. 1:26). The writer of the book of Philippians wrote thus about Christ, "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance

as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:6-8). The book of John begin by telling, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And, then the writer says about the Word, that this Word, Who was with God, in the beginning, and was God, "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1: 1&14). Notice the words here: "as of the only begotten of the Father." Christ Himself was God, but He separated Himself from the Deity, by consent, to become His Son. And said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

Not only did Christ come on the earth to give His life as ransom for the sinners (1 John 4:10), but He also came to reveal God's will to man. He chose twelve disciples. They were His witnesses. After His resurrection from the dead, Christ had commanded them to go and wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come upon them after which they would receive power. (Acts 1:1-8; John 14:25,26; 16:7-15). Which they did, as we read from Acts 2:1-4. Notice, however, that when the Holy Spirit or the Helper was to come to them, Christ had promised, that He would teach them all things, bring to their remembrance all things that He had spoken to them while He was still with them. (Jno. 14:25,26). Moreover, He would guide them into all truth, He said, and would also tell them about the things which were to come. (John 16:13).

Equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles of Christ wrote twenty-seven books, which is the New Testament of the Bible. In these twenty-seven books of the New Testament they wrote everything that God want us to know today; all things that Christ had taught them; all the truth of God; and everything that would come to pass in the future. Notice, about these writings, one of the writers of the New Testament says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Another writer said, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of

man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1: 20,21). In another passage we read this warning: "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." (Galatians 1:8).

The only way God speak to man today is through or by what is written in the New Testament books of the Bible. God is not speaking to man today in dreams or directly to any man. He has spoken to us in these last days by His Son. His Son chose twelve men; they were His spokesmen. What they wrote in the New Testament books of the Bible is His will, not their will. They wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let us respect God's will.

Why Blame God?

J.C. CHOATE

Man is prone to want to blame someone for all that happens to him, especially if it is not in his favour. God is generally the one who is blamed for the big things that happens such as wars, disasters, deaths in families, and so on.

For instance, many have asked why God allowed the past two world wars to take place. There were so many that lost their lives and worlds of destruction was done. The holocaust took place in the last great war with all of its horrors. In addition to all of that, so much energy and money were used that could have been put to better use. So why did God allow all of that to happen? Couldn't he have prevented that? Now while we question God about things that we don't like, we want God to give us the freedom to go on and do what we want to do. If he saw that it was best that we not do something, and stepped in and prevented us from doing it, how would we like that?

The fact is, God wasn't responsible for those wars, or any other war that has been fought. All of that was man's doings. While it was not God's will that such wars be fought, still he left man with the freedom to do what he wanted to do.

God could have prevented Adam and Eve from partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, but had He done so

they would have been as puppets, as slaves, as robots. Their freedom of choice would have been denied and it would have been no glory to God to force them to do what he wanted them to do.

You can read through the Bible and see many bad things that took place, and again the question might be asked, Why did God allow those bad things to happen? But again, it was God's purpose to give man and woman the freedom to choose what they would do or would not do. Surely God was hurt again and again, and continues to be hurt when man chooses to do things that are contrary to his will, but he has made it possible for one and all to decide what they would do or not do. That is freedom.

There are numerous disasters that hit throughout the world such as tornadoes, cyclones, earthquakes, floods, droughts, ice storms, and fires. They bring about death and destruction wherever they hit. Again, the question is asked, Why does God allow such things? It is as though God is deliberately sending such terrible things on man to hurt him and to punish him. It is implied that God delights in hurting people with such events. But it is not God that is directly sending these disastrous acts upon mankind. It is true that God set the law of nature in order and then when the weather conditions develop in a particular area of the world then there may be a tronado, rains that bring about floods, cold weather that produces snows and ice storms, the lack of rain that causes droughts or dry conditions that result in fires, the shifting of the earth that produces earthquakes, etc. Now some of these things, such as floods, might have been prevented in some cases if man had not cut the timber off the hills and mountain sides. Furthermore, man might have chosen to live in areas where floods, fires, or other things might have less likely effected him.

On the other hand, how many thank God for the good weather, rains that produce good crops, water that is damned up to provide drinking water, electricity, and for all of the other needs that we have?

It appears as though we only want to blame God for those things that are not in our interest. Then when the good things come, we fail to credit God with that.

We are often guilty of blaming God for not getting a job or for losing a job, for bad health, for accidents, for deaths in the

family, and for worlds of other things. It is those that experience these things are the ones generally responsible. Some people are unable to find jobs because they did not choose to get an education or to prepare themselves for that particular work. Some lose their jobs because they are lazy or do not efficiently do their work. There are those who contract diseases because of their immorality. Others die early in life because they did not take care of their health. But others die simply because of their age and the laws of nature that govern life. Some have accidents on the road because they were drinking or because they were driving too fast. And on and on it goes.

Actually, what people want in life is to have only the good without the bad. In that case, the Lord has provided for that. Christ came into this world, lived among men, and died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of man. In other words, he died that man might be saved in this world and have the very best things in this life, and then after physical death to go to heaven to live with the Lord forevermore. If you want the best in both worlds—this world and the world to come—then here is your opportunity to have such. But again, the Lord is not going to force you to accept it. He has given one and all the freedom to choose for themselves whether they will accept what he has to offer or to reject it. Keep in mind though that if you reject his offer that you will have to suffer the consequences. (Matthew 25:46).

Do you want to be saved from your sins? You can by believing in God and Christ his Son, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and by being baptized for the remission of your sins. (Hebrews 11:6; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; Mark 16:16). Once you do this, then the Lord will save you and add you to his church, and if you will live the faithful Christian life you will have the hope of eternal life. (Revelation 22:14; Revelation 2:10). It is up to you but don't blame God.

Have I become Your Enemy?

FRANCIS DAVID

Apostle Paul one of the greatest apostles and a preacher of the gospel was a zealous man. He always preached the truth.

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Jews did not like him because he would tell them that what they are doing religiously is wrong. He always refuted their false doctrine. He was convinced that the gospel has the power to save men from their sins and therefore once he even said that "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . ." (Rom. 1:16).

In Galatian chapter four we read that Paul talking to Christians and telling them that they are going back to same old things which they had left after becoming Christians. He says: "But, then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, now is it that you turn again to the *weak and beggarly* elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? . . . I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain. Further he tells them: "**Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?**"

Jesus once said while talking to the people that "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). What is this truth? We read and He says: "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth." (Jn. 17:17). In religious world and in the name of Christianity there are many things which are being taught by the people and these things are entirely contrary to the word of God. The gospel which was preached by Paul to these people was complete and final but they were trying to change it. It is just like today, many want to pervert or make some changes in the true gospel of Christ. He warned these Christians that this gospel from God should not be changed or altered. He knew, they are turning away from the true gospel and that is why we read when he says: "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. (Gal. 1:6-8). What a strong warning!

We have the same true gospel with us and we must preach the same gospel without making any changes. Many are changing the gospel and they are trying to teach different things in the name of Christianity. We must be careful and must not

believe every spirit but rather test or try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets or preachers have gone out into the world. (I Jn. 4:1).

For the last so many years, we are trying to reach people thru our literature and radio programs with the pure new testament gospel. There may be a number of people who think that we are their enemies. Actually, we are not your enemies but instead we would like to tell you what the Bible says. We speak against the error. We tell people that Jesus our Lord established only one church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2) and this is a fact based on the Scriptures. This church wears the name of Christ. There are churches which were founded by men and they are called or known by the names of their founders or may be some particular doctrine that they stress on. My friend, if we tell you there is one church built by the Lord Himself, have we become your enemies?

We teach and preach the plan of salvation based on the Scriptures. We teach one must believe, confess Christ, repent of his sins and be baptised in order to be saved. There are people who do not like to hear about baptism. Our Lord said in His own words: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). Apostle Peter clearly mentions that baptism saves us. Let us see what he says in I Peter 3:21, "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.). Have we become your enemies because we tell you the truth about baptism?

Our Bible tells us that we must sing and make melody in our hearts (minds) and not on mechanical instruments. Paul writes to Christians at Ephesus by saying: "Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." This is the way we must praise our God almighty. Many want to support instrumental music in worship giving the quotations from Old testament. We must know in which Law we are living today. We are not govern by the Old Law but by the New Law. Christ Jesus nailed the old law to the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15). Have we become your enemies when we tell you this truth concerning our singing in worship?

What about wearing religious titles? We preach and teach that wearing special titles religiously is contrary to the word of

God. Many today call themselves as Rev., Right Rev., or Most Rev., Father, Padri etc. Nowhere in the Bible we read that apostles or some Christians were ever known by these titles. These were given by human minds to the religious leaders. The scribes were delighted to be called Abba, father and so do the many religious leaders of today. Do we read in the Bible that Apostle Paul was called as Rev. Paul or Father Paul. Christ assuredly condemned the religious titles denoting any kind of authority. Jesus said, call no man Father. You must read Mathew chapter 23 and you will see how Jesus our Lord spoke against the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. When Christ talked to the Jews about it they did not like it. How said it is that a large part of Christendom is ignorant about this commandment. Please also read Psalm 111:9 "HOLY and REVEREND is HIS (God's name). Therefore my friend, if we tell you this truth of the Bible. have we become your enemies?

Dear reader, there are other number of things which are being practised in Christianity blindly by the people. Some are ignorant about these but some know about it but because of the hardness of their hearts they do not want to change. How sad! We are not your enemies, but we are your friends and that is why we want to share with you the truths of the Bible. We hope and pray that you will open your Bible and read for your selves and will obey the commandments which are revealed in the Scriptures.

Behold The Man

VANCE HUTTON

The word "behold" is often used in the Bible to mean "to take notice thereof". There are so many things which we would do well if we would behold or take notice. In John 19:5, Pilate said to behold the man Jesus. In John 1, twice John the Baptizer made reference to beholding the man Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29,36). Let us take notice of the man Jesus, the man's mission, the man's message, the man's miracles, and the man's mansions.

I. BEHOLD THE MAN

Jesus is our model by which to live. Let us follow Him (Jn. 21:22). He left us an example (I Pet. 2:21). His mind to be in us (Phil. 2:5). We are to look at Him as a mirror and strive to be like Him (II Cor. 3:18). We are to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). We wear His name which implies that we live like Him (Acts 11:26). Behold the man Jesus. Take notice of His humility, forgiveness, compassion, meekness, obedience, prayerfulness, love for souls, love for His enemies, good works, interest in the lost, purity, priorities and all the other great traits of Jesus. Behold His hands, feet, and riven side (Lk. 24:39). One day you will take notice of Him (Rom. 14:11-12). Please don't wait until judgment.

II. BEHOLD THE MAN'S MISSION

Jesus came out of interest in men. He came to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). He came that men might have abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Jesus came to do the will of the Father (Jn. 17:4). Christ lived to please the father (Jn. 8:29). The Lord's mission was to do good (Acts 10:38). Jesus came to establish the church (Matt. 16:18). Our mission has to do with saving the lost, extending heaven's invitation, and glorifying, obeying and pleasing the Father.

III. BEHOLD THE MAN'S MESSAGE

We must take notice of the Lord's message. The Lord's words are spirit and life. They are words of eternal life (Jn. 6:63,68). Earth will pass but not these words (Matt. 24:35). These words will judge us in the last day (Jn. 12:48). To be wise, we must heed the Lord's message (Matt. 7:24-27).

IV. BEHOLD THE MAN'S MIRACLES

Except we believe in Jesus as the Son of God we will die in sin (Jn. 8:24). Part of the motivating power for us to believe in Jesus is found in His power. Take notice of His power in creation (Rev. 3:14). His works testify of who Jesus is (Jn. 5:36). Take notice of the miracles He did. Many are recorded that we might believe (Jn. 20:30-31). Behold such power.

V. BEHOLD THE MAN'S MANSIONS

Let us behold or take notice of the Lord's mansions. Jesus spoke of that place of the great reward in (Jn. 14:1-3). The inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled and fades not away (1 Peter 1:3-5). This glorious place is one of no tears, pain, sorrow, death, crying, night, hunger, and sin. The alternative is just the very opposite. Friends take notice of these things, BEHOLD THE MAN JESUS! Behold His missions, message, miracles, and mansions. We will be eternally blessed if our lives are lived in view of these realities.

Satan Makes New Offers to Us

CLEM THURMAN

When Moses saw the burning bush, he could not dream of the events that lay ahead. God had a difficult job for Moses in leading the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The problems were increased by the fact that the Pharaoh flatly refused them permission to leave. At least, at first he did. Later, when the plagues came that Moses had foretold, Pharaoh changed his tactics. He began to offer counter-proposals that would remove the plague but still help him maintain some hold over the people of Israel.

Jesus calls us out of the world (Jno 15:18-19; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) in a similar way that Israel was called out of Egypt. But there can be no halfway measures with Him: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness . . . Present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . He that renounceth not all that he hath cannot be my disciple*" (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 12:1; Lk. 14:33). As Pharaoh dealt with Israel, so Satan deals with us, for all sinners are slaves, in bondage to him (Jno. 8:34; Rom. 6:16-17; Heb. 2:14-15). We are told: "*Be subject to God, but resist the devil*" (Jas 4:7), and, "*That no advantage be gained over us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Cor. 2:11). Our call out of sin and into Christ calls for a commitment on our part, a commitment Satan tries to prevent. Satan is using today the same kind of tactics that confronted Israel in Egypt.

"GO YE, SACRIFICE TO YOUR GOD IN THE LAND"

The plagues had begun, just as Moses had said. The waters turned to blood, frogs covered the land, then lice, and flies. Pharaoh was not yet ready to give in, but he evidently wanted Israel to think so. So he finally permitted them to go and sacrifice to God, but notice how he limited it: "*Go ye sacrifice to your God in the land*" (Ex. 8:25). This seemed a big concession, but there was a catch to it. As long as they remained in the land, they were still under the control of the Pharaoh and under the influence of Egyptian culture with its idolatry. The offer of the Pharaoh was refused. Two of the first commandments given Israel later at Sinai forbade them to have "*other gods*" or to make "*graven images*" to worship. God demanded a complete separation for His people.

The Lord exhorts today, "*Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate*" (2 Cor. 6:17), and that is written specifically about other religions. But He expects us to separate ourselves from sin, also. The process of becoming a Christian involves our death to sin, burial with Christ in baptism and resurrection to new life (Rom. 6:3-4). The result is stated, "*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be bondage to sin*" (v. 6). We are no longer to live as the world does, "*But unto him who . . . died and rose again*" (2 Cor. 5:15). We ought to be able to say, as Paul did, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20). God will not be satisfied with less of a commitment than that! He tells us, "*Ye shall be holy, even as he who called you is holy*" (1 Pet. 1:15). Satan is saying, "*Go . . . in the land.*" He knows that until we make the commitment to leave other religions and all sin behind, we are still in bondage.

"GO . . . ONLY YE SHALL NOT GO VERY FAR"

When Moses refused the offer of the Pharaoh to stay in the land, the ruler made another offer: "*Go, that ye may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away*" (Ex. 8:28). That is easy to see through, isn't it? To go "*not very far*" would make it easy for them to return to slavery in Egypt when problems in their new life would arise. In fact, that is

what some of them later proposed when things became difficult for them (Ex. 14:12; Num. 14:3). Moses turned down the offer, for God wanted his people far from the influence of the sinful conditions in Egypt. So He led them across the Red Sea that they might become a free people.

As Israel was *"baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"* (1 Cor. 10:2), one is made *"free from sin"* today when he is *"baptized into Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 6:3-4,18). The Pharaoh knew that the Red Sea was the "boundary line" and he fought to keep Israel on his side of it. Satan knows that baptism is the "boundary line" between the world and the church, between slavery and freedom, between being in sin and being in Christ (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 8:35-39; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 3:21). And Satan fights to keep us on his side. But if Satan cannot prevent us from being baptized into Christ, he then would persuade us of the importance of our job, our family, our need for recreation, preparing for retirement—and a hundred other such things—all designed to keep us from making a real commitment to leave the world and live for Jesus Christ. The devil says, *"Go only not very far."*

"GO, YE MEN . . . BUT NOT YOUR LITTLE ONES"

The Pharaoh's next proposal is found in Ex. 10:8-11. He asked, *"Who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and our daughters . . . And he said, unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord."* By persuading them to leave the children behind, the Pharaoh would be able to maintain his hold over the parents, for they would surely be back. This offer, too was declined. The Lord wanted the children under the influence of godly parents who worshipped God and taught their children to worship God.

Satan whispers to us today, "Kids will be kids, let them sow their wild oats . . . Let them make up their own mind, don't force religion on them." But God answers, *"Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* (Eccle. 12:1). The training a child receives in

the early years forms the basis of character that will determine his life in adulthood. The training that children need includes a reverence for God, with the determination to live for Him. We don't dare "*leave the little ones behind,*" for they need the knowledge of God from an early age to be able properly to formulate their life's plans.

It amazes me that parents will say, "I don't believe in forcing my child to go to church." Will they force the child to go to school? Will they force the child to go to the doctor? Will they force the child to take a bath, to go to bed, to get up, to play some place besides the freeway, and dozens of other such things? The truth is, parents are training their children, whether they realize it or not. If they are not training them "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:1), they are training them to live a life without God! If the cause of the Lord is to prosper in the next generation, and if our children are to prosper spiritually, we must train the children now who will be the leaders then. We dare not leave "*the little ones*" in the hands of the devil!

"GO . . . BUT NOT YOUR HERDS"

The last offer of the Pharaoh is in Ex. 10:24, "*Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and herds be stayed.*" Pharaoh knew what the Lord later stated, "*Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also*" (Matt. 6:21). If he could maintain control of their possessions, the king could still wield great power over them. To go and leave behind the means of their livelihood would almost surely guarantee their return. Just as with the other offers, Moses rejected this one: "*Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God*" (Ex. 10:26).

The devil often uses this tactic on us today: "Don't let being a Christian interfere with your business, don't let it affect your pocketbook." But The Lord wants **ALL** that we are, that we have, that we can do. He tells us, "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth*" (Lk. 12:15). He exhorts, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*" (Matt. 6:33). If we would know the real joy of ownership (or more accurately, stewardship), we must learn to give. The Lord said,

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The apostle Paul wrote of Christ, *"Though he were rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). Until we learn to love the Lord enough to *"bring Him the cattle and herds,"* we have not really left Egypt.

The Lord pleads, *"Come ye out from among them"* (2 Cor. 6:17). This means total surrender to His will, complete reliance on His guidance and total denial of self. Satan will make it as difficult as he can for us to make the commitment the Lord wants from us. But if we would please Jesus Christ, we must, *"depart from the land"* of sin, getting as far from its influence as we possible can. And when we leave sin and come to the Lord, we must bring our children and our possessions with us to devote to the Lord. Only then can we say with the apostle Paul, *"What things were gain to me, these do I count but loss for Christ . . . and count them but refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in him"* (Phil. 3:7-9).

Faith-Proving Action

JOHNNY RAMSEY

It is evident from a study of the glorious book of Acts that the early Christians taught daily, publicly and privately (Acts 5:42), the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8-11). They took seriously the challenge of Christ's great commission (Matt. 28), as they emblazoned the glad tidings of redemption in their age. How was it possible to get so much done with so few so soon? Besides the poverty and persecution that surrounded them, we can readily discern the enmity of Judaism, Gnosticism, Romanism and Paganism on every hand. However, according to 1 Cor. 16:9, they believed that tribulation and open doors of evangelism went together. Paul could write of *"saints in Caesar's household"* (Phil. 4:22) even while in a prison cell under Neronian persecution!

Heroic preaching, like Paul set forth before Felix and King Agrippa (Acts 24:25; 26:29), will still cause sinners to tremble and be persuaded to obey the *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (Rev. 17:14). May we ever be loyal to the Lord, preserving and

joyous, as we share the sweet story of God's redeeming love and His matchless grace.

The book of Acts occupies a unique position in the New Testament. In many ways the book is the pivotal section of the whole Bible. Historically, it meshes prophecy and fulfillment cogently in the events of Pentecost (Acts 2). Fundamentally, Acts serves as the history book of the New Testament as it provides background material for other books. For instance, Galatians goes back to chapters 13 and 14, and the first tour of evangelism that Paul and Barnabas engaged in for the Master. Philippians is based upon the events chronicled in Acts 16 while chapter 17 introduces the Thessalonian epistles. Corinth received two letters from Paul that reflect the tremendous start of Christianity there as depicted in Acts 18. The grand treatise the Ephesians is built upon the dramatic events of Acts 19 and 20.

The New Testament has four major stanzas. First, in Matthew through John, we learn of the life of Jesus Christ. Next, in Acts, we are taught how to become a Christian. The third section, Romans through Jude, sets forth how to live the Christian life. The last section is the final book, Revelation, which informs us of the hope which Christians possess.

The clarity of the cases of conversion in this faith New Testament book naturally coincides with the plan of salvation which Jesus had previously told His disciples to proclaim. All accountable beings in the gospel age must:

1. Believe the message of Christ's glorious gospel, or die in their sins (Jno. 8:24; Acts 16:31-35; Mk. 16:16).
2. Repent of their iniquities, or perish! (Lk. 13:3,5; Acts 8:12; 8:26-39; 22:16; Gal. 3:27).
3. Be baptized, upon confession of faith in Him (Acts 8:12; 8:26-39; 22:16; Gal. 3:27).
4. Remain faithful and loyal to the Savior (Rev. 2:10; Gal. 6:9; 2 Pet. 3:17-18).

The book of Acts powerfully sets forth the establishment of the church of our Lord, which He built (Matt. 16:18) and to which He adds the saved (Acts 2:47). The beauty and necessity of this blood-bought organism (Acts 20:28) is stressed. Verily, Christ is glorified in His church forever (Eph. 3:21).

Stone of Stumbling

W.A. HOLLEY

In the Bible "a stone of stumbling" is used of any object over which a person might trip the foot, and hence the stone is the cause of ruin or disgust (Isaiah 57:14). In Zephaniah's time idols were stumblingblocks that caused the Jewish people to fall from God's grace (Zephaniah 1; Ezekial 7:19). Their idols were lifeless, powerless and thus could not save them.

What is idolatry? It is the ascribing of divine honors to any created thing, as the sun, moon, stars, stones, trees, men, money, etc. Jesus, in His contest with Satan, said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). When John the Apostle was about to worship an angel, he was warned, being told, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: Worship God" (Revelation 22:9).

In fact, Jesus became "a stumblingblock" to the Jews because His words and deeds offended them as they did not correspond to their pre-conceptions of what they thought the Messiah should be (Romans 9:32; I Peter 2:8).

In Isaiah's day God became a stumblingblock to Israel because they put their faith and trust in an idol rather than in Him who created all things and who inhabits (Isaiah 8:13-15, 57:3-5, 14-15,20).

From a figurative point of view there are many modern stumblingblocks. What are some of them?

(1) The one church, the church that Jesus built, the church that is mentioned in your Bible, has become a stumbling block to many honest and sincere people. But it should not be so. (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:4-6; Romans 16:16). why not accept what your Bible says about the church? Denominationalism, in all its shapes and forms, is not found in your Bible. Jesus does not want His followers divided; rather He wants them united John 17:20-23; I Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-6; I Corinthians 11:18). One famous preacher, in his prayer, said, "I thank God for religious division, that we may have church for everyone's choice . . ." Friends, Jesus could not have voiced

such a prayer!! Justification of denominationalism is a slap in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ!!

Some words of wisdom are in order: From a Bible point of view, there is but one true church, but there are many counterfeit churches, churches not mentioned in God's Holy Bible.

The church of Christ is unique. On what grounds? The church of Christ accepts the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible as the foundation of all that we teach and do on worship and service to God Almighty. We are taught that we must not add to or subtract from what God has commanded (Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6).

Dear Friends, do not stumble over the Biblical church! We, the members of the church of Christ, wish to restore the primitive simplicity of the New Testament church in our day as it was on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:1-47; Luke 8:11). The same seed planted now will produce the same fruit it produced then (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:22-23).

(2) One should never stumble over the Lord's command of water baptism; yet countless thousands do. Many preachers spend their time in devising facetious arguments endeavoring to get around the Lord's command of baptism (John 3:3-5; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Acts 22:26).

Why should one stumble at baptism? Why object to a commandment of the Lord? (Acts 10:48; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). Was not Jesus baptized? (Matthew 3:13-17). Jesus was not baptized *for, or in order to receive the remission of sin*, nor was he baptized "because of remission of sin." Why was Jesus baptized? He was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness," (Matthew 3:15). One fulfills "all righteousness," when one keeps the commandments of the Lord (Psalm 119:172). Baptism depicts in three steps . . . going to water . . . going into the water . . . coming up out of the water (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4). Sprinkling or pouring could never satisfy the demands of Scripture.

John the Baptizer baptized great numbers of people (Mark 1:1-13; Luke 3:3). Those who refused John's baptism, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29-30). Why stumble at the Lord's command of baptism? On the birthday of the church, the First Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection about 3,000 men and women were baptized

(Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-47).

Some who were baptized with John's baptism after it expired were required to be baptized a second time. (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7). Even today, if one has been baptized because he was already saved, needs to be baptized a second time for, unto, in order to receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Matthew 26:28). It is not a question of whether you are satisfied with your baptism, rather, the question is: Is God satisfied with your baptism??

(3) Do you stumble at Acappella music in church worship?? Just read the New Testament and you will see Organs, pianos, orchestras, a chorus, quartets, solos, *et al*, are not even mentioned there.

Please read: Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; I Corinthians 14-15; Ephesus 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; and James 5:13. These verses teach singing—not the use of some mechanical instrument of music. God has specific and generic commands. When God commanded Noah to build the ark of gopher wood, all other kinds of wood were excluded. (Genesis 6:14). When God ordered Naaman to dip seven times in the river Jordan, he excluded the rivers of Damascus (II Kings 5:8-14).

While instruments were available for use on the First pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, the church of Christ did not use them. Consult The American Encyclopaedia, Vol. 12, p. 688, which says "Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches of Western Europe about 670 . . ." The Greek Orthodox Church has never used it. The Lord's church was established in A.D. 33 (Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 42-47).

We are not trying to be different. We are contending "earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). To show that some prominent scholars have expressed thoughts which support the biblical exclusion of instruments view, we shall quote from their writings. We shall submit a few quotations:

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, "I have no objection to the organ in our chapel, provided that it is neither seen nor heard."

John Calvin, a great leader of Protestantism, said, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more

suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps and the restoration of other shadows of the law.”

Adam Clarke, in his great Commentary, VI, p. 686, wrote: “I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them (instruments of music) productive of any good in worship of God; and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God, I abominate and abhor.”

True worship requires man's best effort and that must conform exactly to God's directives (John 4:24; Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-47). God, not man, initiates and controls the boundaries and activities of worship acceptable to Him. Those who try to worship God according to their own way can never please God.

What Does Hebrews 10:25 Really Teach?

NEAL POLLARD

The oft-posed question is, “When, besides those times when I am hindered and unable, can I be absent from the assembly?” The spin-off to that inquiry usually is, “Does the Bible teach that one must attend all the assemblies?” Let us assume, as we should, that these questions are asked by honest hearts searching for the correct, biblical answer. What does the Bible say?

Frequently, the place in the scriptures where one goes for the answer in Hebrews 10:25. The verse reads, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching”. Does this passage refer to worship? Is it a command?

In response, it is important to widen our view of Hebrews ten beyond merely verse 25. The chapter begins by contrasting the Old Law with the New. Mention is made of sacrifices (1-22). The idea of sacrificing is sustained throughout these verses by the words “offering”, “offered”, and “offer”. When were

"sacrifices" "offered"? Verse two explicitly affirms that such was during the worship "assemblies" under Moses' Law.

If the Hebrews' writer does not change the subject in verse 23, the subject should remain "worship". In verses 1-18, the inspired writer contrasts the Levitical (Old) system of continual sacrifice to the once-for-all sacrifice made by Christ on Calvary. While animal sacrifices ended with the supreme sacrifice, worship did not end. Example of worship on the first day of every week is documented by passages such as Acts 20:7 and Corinthians 16:1-2. A corporate meeting of the saints for spiritual strength is recorded in Acts 11:12. The idea of fellowship (1 John 1:17) and congregational Bible study (1 Timothy 4:13) also compels the local church to assemble.

Verse 19 is built upon the foundation of the subject matter discussed in the previous verses (*Note*: "Therefore" means "for this or that reason; consequently; hence"). The Hebrews' writer is drawing a conclusion. The conclusion is that, because Christ established a New and Better Law by His sacrifice, Christians can approach God in worship as priests (see 1 Peter 2:5,9).

At this point (10:19-25), the writer lays down legislation for this kingdom of priests. Christians are commanded to (1) "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . ." (10:22), (2) "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering . . ." (10:23), and (3) "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . ." (10:24-25). Thus, we are condemned if we fail to (1) manifest active faith, (2) remain faithful, or (3) consider fellow-Christians (assembling is clearly part of that spiritual consideration). Hebrews 10:26-31 warns against willfully violating any of those commands (remember, sin is transgression of the law—1 John 3:4). Then, Hebrews 10:32-39 accentuates the need for Christians to faithfully endure all for their Lord. Part of what constitutes faithfulness is attending the assemblies.

Please prayerfully consider these questions based on Hebrews ten. Do we obey Hebrews 10:25 when we willfully absent ourselves from the assemblies? Can we consider one another unto love and good works more effectively present or absent from the assemblies? Is willful absence from the assemblies willful sin? Does being absent without true hindrance please God?

Never take any answer at face value. Carefully study Hebrews ten. Closely examine what is involved in faithfulness, endurance, and pleasing God. Soberly consider what input deliberate absence from the assemblies has on other Christians, including new or weak Christians. Study carefully, then please make the right choice.

Is Doctrine Really All That Important?

JASON ROBERTS

A popular cry from some today is, "why don't you quit preaching so much doctrine and start preaching more about Jesus." Statements such as this not only hurt the message that faithful gospel preachers are trying to preach, but they reflect on the very message our Lord preached. Clearly, some people have a misunderstanding as to the biblical meaning of doctrine? For some, "doctrine" may be any sermon that falls outside the realm of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. In other words, sermons on marriage and divorce, the role of women, and New Testament worship, would be categorized under the title of "doctrinal sermons." This distinction that some make is harmful for two reasons: First, it causes one to shuffle the message of our Lord into "personal preference preaching," failing to see that the entire message of Christ should be our preference. Second, it blinds one to the fact that the gospel and doctrine are one and the same (Romans 1:15; cf. 6:17). Is doctrine really all that important? Why are some having difficulty in understanding the biblical meaning of doctrine? I believe that a careful examination of the Lord's sermon on the mount will answer these questions:

Is doctrine really all that important? AT the conclusion of His sermon there are two simple, yet often overlooked passages with four key words that inseparably attach biblical doctrine with Christ. "*and it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*" (Matt. 7:28-29). Observe first of all the word "sayings." This is

quite simply the message that he spoke. The word "sayings" (logos) means a discourse, doctrine, the moral precepts given by God (Robertson). Then his sermon the people were astonished at his **doctrine**. Question: were the sayings of Jesus considered to be doctrine? The word "doctrine" (didache) means teaching, the act of teaching or instruction (Robertson). The Jews had no problem understanding that the message delivered to them was doctrine. Matthew, writing by inspiration, stated that "they were astonished at his doctrine." How sad, that a group of unbelieving, rebellious, stubborn-headed Jews had no problem equating the message of Christ as being doctrine, yet, today, some who are Christians fail to see the same relationship.

I have read this great sermon and have arrived at twenty six different themes that our Lord taught. These themes from the entire hub of Christian living! When a person broadly suggests that we need to quit preaching so much doctrine and start preaching more about Jesus, notice what he does to the Sermon on the mount. He eliminates preaching on: (1) those who are spiritually destitute as result from being outside of Christ (5:3), (2) sin and Godly sorrow (5:4), (3) humility (5:5), (4) thirsting and hungering after righteousness (5:6), and since all of his commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), and righteousness is found only in the gospel (Romans 1:17), this eliminates all preaching!, (5) attitudes toward others, forgiveness (5:7), (6) morality (5:8), (7) living with our fellow-man (5:9), (8) persecutions (5:10), (9) our influence in the world (5:13-16), (10) the Old Testament (law of Moses) (5:17-20), (11) hatred and murder (5:21-22), (12) worshiping correctly (5:23-26), (13) lust in the heart, adultery (5:27-32), (14) pure speech (5:33-37), (15) retaliation (5:38-40), (16) doing more than one's duty (5:41-42), (17) true love (5:43-48), (18) true religion (6:1-18), (19) worldliness (6:19-24), (20) the church (6:33), (21) prayer (7:7-11), (22) the golden rule (7:12), (23) heaven and hell (7:13-14), (24) false teachers (7:15), (25) obedience (7:21-23), (26) improper and proper foundations of building (7:24-27). Is doctrine important? Dear friend, one of the greatest sermons, containing the supreme virtues of Christian living is eliminated from the Bible if doctrine is meaningless. Our Lord thought, the Holy Spirit thought, and the Jews thought that doctrine was not

incidental, rather they thought it was fundamental. What about us today? Do we view the teachings of God's Holy Word as doctrinal or do we pick and choose what we consider to be doctrine? When someone diminishes the vale of doctrine by attempting to elevate Christ above it, he fails to see that when one preaches Christ he is preaching doctrine.

Why are some having difficulty understanding the biblical meaning of doctrine? I believe it is found in two words from the last verse of our study from the sermon on the Mount. "For He taught them as one having **authority**, and not as the scribes (7:29). Jesus' teaching was authoritative and the Jews recognized his message as being such. His message was unlike the message from the scribes of their day. On one occasion they said, "*never man spake like this man*" (John 7:46). The problem that so many have with doctrine is the fact that it is restrictive. The word of God is powerful (Hebrews 4:12), it comes from the mouth of Almighty God (2 Timothy 3:16a), and it is authoritative (Matthew 24:35). We live in a age when people do not want to be restricted when it comes to religious matters. Our nation (as well as some in the church) has adopted this devilish philosophy of, "You can't tell me what to do. I'll do my thing and you do yours." Yet, God has legislated morality and he can and has told people what to do, and therefore his word is restrictive. Why? Because he does not want anyone to get hurt. His commandments are for our protection. When God says, "Thou shalt not . . .," he is doing this for our protection and benefit. So the Christian should be thankful that the doctrine of Christ is restrictive. This thought is clearly seen when the apostle Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:19-21). Paul lists a series of prohibitions from sin, because these commands not only will keep one from going to heaven but they also will hurt us if we engage in them, and so his doctrine is restrictive. When he lists the fruits of the spirit, Paul states, "*against such there is no law*" (Galatians 5:23b). Who would want to have a restriction placed upon the amount of love they should manifest in their life? There are no restrictions when it comes to things pertaining to the fruits of the spirit, but those things that are harmful to us, God by His divine authority, and for our eternal well-being, has placed restrictions on what we can and cannot do.

Perhaps some are having as difficulty in the area of understanding what doctrine is because they had equated it with something the church of Christ began teaching. Friends, doctrine began the moment scripture was recorded (Gen. 1:1). Doctrine is not something that began with Alexander Campbell or anyone else. The word simply means instruction or teaching. People must see that a sermon on the subject of the role of women in worship and a sermon on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ are both doctrinal sermons! In fact, it is rather interesting to study how the terms doctrine, gospel, faith and word are all used interchangeably in the scriptures. The entire message of the Bible is the doctrine of God, and it is also the gospel. Paul stated to the Ephesian elders, "*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27) Paul did not categorize his sermons as being either doctrinally oriented or Jesus oriented, he simply preached the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

When people suggest that we need to preach less doctrine and more about Jesus, they fail to see the true meaning of the word doctrine and they mishandle the very message that is able to save their souls. Is doctrine really all that important? Let's ask the apostle Paul if he thought so. "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the **doctrine**; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (1 Timothy 4:16). Important indeed!



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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 July 2000

Delhi Postal Regn. No. DL-11262/2000

Regd. No. 26921/71

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