

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace . . ."

Confusion prevails when all claiming to be on the same way, yet walk on different paths. Peace abides when all agree to accept the same rule of authority in the same way. When the Bible says, at 1 Corinthians 14:33, "God is not the author of confusion but of peace" it means, God speaks the same thing, through the Bible, to all people everywhere, and expects all to follow the same rule in the same manner. The obvious confusion that is seen in the religious world today has not been authored by God, but is the creation of man. God is the author of peace, which returns when men quit following men, and accept God's authority in everything.

The apostle Paul was very unhappy with the church at Corinth, because they were causing division or confusion by calling themselves by different names. And here it is what he told them: "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." He further said, "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 says, "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 baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). What Paul was implying here is that there is only one Christ, and that He is the only one who was crucified for all, and that all who are baptized are baptized in His name or by His authority (Mt. 28:19-20). Therefore, all who are His followers must be called after His name alone. And that name is Christian. We cannot say Christian without saying Christ. But suppose Paul or any other apostle of Christ was amongst us today, what would he say today, observing several hundred names by which all who claim to be following Christ are called?

Has not God authorised only one name by which Christ's followers must be called today? James said, "Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?" (James 2:7). Notice he didn't say, names, but name. They were all called by same one name, and that name was Christian. Look at Acts 11:26, where it says, "And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Hearing Paul preach the Gospel of Christ, king Agrippa reacted by saying to Paul, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Peter said, "if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Peter 4:16). Christian, Christian, Christian, this is the only name by which the followers of Christ were called in the beginning. But why not today? Why there are so many types and kinds of Christians? Christ had promised to build His own church (Matthew 16:18). And all the saved ones He adds to that church even today. (Acts 2:47). But why there are so many denominational churches today? God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. He has authorised only one name, only one church, only one way to be saved, only one way to worship Him, and only one way to go to heaven. Man's teachings and doctrines has created confusion. We need to turn back to the Bible, to the book of God; and call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible way. Does it Sound reasonable? It Sure does!

Women Preachers

J.C. CHOATE

In our day more and more women are becoming preachers. Many of the pulpits are now being filled by them and they are often seen on TV programmes. In a time in which the women's lib movement is in full swing, the idea of "women preachers" fits right in with the idea of women taking the lead in many or all fields that were formerly reserved for men.

The question here, however, is not a matter of men suppressing women and forbidding them to preach, not allowing them to enter a field of work where men have previously played a dominant role, but does **the Lord**, Himself, authorize woman to take the lead in doing this kind of public work in the church today?

When we look at the public ministry of Jesus we find Him choosing 12 individuals to serve as His Apostles. Who were these Apostles? *They were all men!* Later when Judas betrayed Christ and another was selected to take his place, even though there were faithful women among His disciples, still it was *a man* that was chosen (Acts 1:26). And when one was appointed by God "out of due season" to become an Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul—a *man*—was the selection.

After the church had been established and had begun to grow and spread throughout the world, there was a need for leaders in each congregation. According to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, those Christians who were qualified were to be appointed as Elders and Deacons. In both cases they were to be *men*, not women. In reply to those who believe that women can also serve as Elders, someone said that, based on the requirements listed in the Scriptures, he did not know how a woman could be the husband of one wife!

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, He appeared before the Apostles—*all men*—and commanded them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). Also, read Matthew 28:19,20.

Coming over to Acts 2, we are told that those same Apostles—*all men*—were in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost

after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and began to preach to the great crowd of people that gathered there. As a result, many believed and asked what else they should do. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. About 3,000—*both men and women*—gladly received the word and were baptized, and the Lord added those who were thus saved to His church. Read Acts 2.

Later, seven good *men* with an honest report and full of the Holy Spirit were appointed to help the Apostles. These served the church in the capacity of deacons.

Reading through the book of Acts, you will note that it was always *the men* who publicly preached the gospel and took the lead in other public work.

The overwhelming conclusion, then, is that the Lord chose *men* to preach and to lead the church in all of its public activities. No where in the New Testament do you find women publicly preaching, leading in prayers, directing the singing, and waiting on the Lord's Table. God placed man in the leadership role, and we must respect His wisdom in doing that.

But is it only by the emphasis on the work of men that we would conclude that women are not to be public leaders in the church of Christ? No, the Scriptures very clearly says in inspiration, "*Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression*" (1 Timothy 2:14).

The reason which was given in this passage shows that the prohibition was not a cultural thing but a law made by God's direction.

"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says" (1 Corinthians 14:34).

In the Old Testament, God spoke to *the fathers by the prophets—all men*—. He used *men* to write the Scriptures; *men* were the kings and priests, and with only one exception (Deborah), *men were the judges*. Why was there one woman judge? Because in all Israel, there was no man with the courage to lead the people! That fact should set off alarms in the ears of

men who would relinquish their God-given responsibilities today. God created men to lead and women to be the helpers. We have no authority to change His order of leadership.

When women left the home to take up work in the outside world, the home began to hurt. With the passing of time, many women have taken on the work of men, while their own work—for which they were especially designed by God—was neglected. In too many cases, now, men are not carrying their own responsibilities; they abandon their wives and families, and live for themselves. With this change in roles, the home, the church, and the world are in trouble. It is critical that we go back to God's plan, and that men assume their role as leaders, and that women devote themselves to their homes, families, and husbands.

Does the woman, then, have responsibility and work to do in the Lord's church? We read of Priscilla, with her husband, teaching Apollos privately (Acts 18:26); the church often met in the homes of women (Romans 16); women provided help and support in the preaching of the Gospel. In segregated classes in the church, as well as privately, women are to teach other women and children (Titus 2:3-5). Women are also entrusted (1 Timothy 5:14) with the most important work of keeping the home and children. God bless them as they obey!

Especially For Women

Search for Truth Premillennialism and the Coming of Christ

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Continuing with studies that had resulted from the house-to-house visitation in Suddoth, Andrew was meeting weekly with Jacob and Miriam Ellsworth. They were regularly attending the Sunday gatherings at Matthew's house, but they had many questions and were eager to learn answers. It was decided that, for the benefit of the new Christians as well as the Ellsworths and others who might want to come, Andrew would lead a period of Bible Study each Tuesday night, dealing with some of the

conflicts in their beliefs.

"I'm confused on the meaning of this 'millennium' I've been hearing about," Jacob began. "Some say that Jesus will come, and that He will set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, to reign there a thousand years. They quote the Scripture about the lamb lying down with the lion, and they say that Christians will reign with Christ after the Battle of Armageddon has been fought and won. What about all of that? Will Jesus reign as king in Jerusalem?"

"It's an interesting thing to me," answered Andrew, "that the Jews were looking for an earthly king and for the old kingdom of Israel to be restored in Jerusalem, to such a degree that **they could not see Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies!** And people today make the *same mistake!* In spite of all that Jesus and His disciples taught and wrote, even today most believers in Christ are waiting for Him to come back to this earth and reign as a king.

"But in very clear language, Jesus Himself said to Pilate at His trial: '*My kingdom is not of this world. . .*' (John 18:36). That should settle the question, once and for all. But still, people refuse to believe Him.

"In Matthew 3:2, John the Baptist had come preaching, '*. . . the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . .*' and when Jesus was baptized and began to preach, He, too, said, '*. . . the kingdom of heaven is at hand*' (Matthew 4:17). When the disciples finally understood who Jesus was—that He was truly the Son of God—Jesus said that He would build **His church** upon that fact, and then He promised in the next verse, '*. . . I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. . .*' (Matthew 16:18,19). In verse 28 of that chapter, He promised, '*. . . there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*' In Mark's recording of this promise, another factor is mentioned concerning the coming of the kingdom: that it would come **with power** (Mark 9:1). So, as we read the Scriptures, **when the power came, we know that this was heralding also the coming of the kingdom!**

"In Acts 1:3, before Jesus' ascension to heaven, He was with the disciples, '*. . . speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*' In verse 6, just before Jesus returned to the Father, Peter felt compelled to find out exactly when that long-awaited kingdom would actually come, so he asked, '*Lord, will*

You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Do you see that **even then**, after all of Jesus' teaching about the spiritual nature of His kingdom, still His own disciples were expecting Him to restore the might and glory of the old kingdom of David in Jerusalem? Many preachers and believers, **even today**, would echo Peter's question. They are standing at the very same place in their understanding and expectations.

"But a drastic change took place in the understanding of Peter and the other apostles just a few days after Jesus' ascension to God. On the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them, and they began to preach the *gospel of the kingdom* for the first time! **The power had come!** Peter quoted from Joel 2, concerning the out-pouring of the Spirit of God, and he said, '*... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. . .*' (verse 16). He preached about King David, and about Jesus being raised up by God to be both Lord and Christ, the king reigning even at that time on David's throne, which was not in Jerusalem but was at the right hand of God! Truly, the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus came to establish among men, was and is a *spiritual kingdom!*

At the end of Peter's very convincing sermon, the people cried out, wanting to know how to be forgiven for crucifying the one whom God had sent as their King, and '*Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." . . . Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*'

"The word '*church*' simply means '*the called out*', those who have been called out of the world to be a part of the Lord's family, His spiritual body, His spiritual kingdom. All of these terms, and others, are used in the Scriptures to show us the relationship between our Lord and His people. All of these terms are also used interchangeably, and all have reference to the same group of people, those who have been saved out of the world, by being washed in the blood of Christ. We read, '*... Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*' (Revelation 1:5).

John's statement in Revelation goes even further, to say of us who are children in the kingdom, that Christ *'... has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. . .'* (Verse 6).

"Before the day of Pentecost, all references to the kingdom were in the future tense—a thing not yet in existence. But after the day of Pentecost, all the passages speak of the kingdom as being already in existence. That data was the dividing line. On that data the kingdom or the church was no longer a thing of promise, but it had come at last! From that day the doors of the kingdom had been opened by the keys given to the apostles, and people could obey God and be added to the church or kingdom.

"Some people read Revelation 20, where John wrote of those who 'lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,' and they misunderstand. This is not a description of an earthly throne or of Christ reigning in Jerusalem. If the text is read carefully, we see that John said, 'And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them, And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God.. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.' So John saw a **heavenly scene**, of souls who had been martyred for Christ, and **these reigned with Christ** for a thousand years.

*"In 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, the apostle Paul described some interesting things for us. He said that in Adam all die, that is, all of us become sinners and are subject to death because of the sin brought into the world through Adam and Eve. But through Christ we who have been born into God's family—the church, the kingdom—we have been made alive spiritually. Then Paul said that Christ is the firstfruits, the first to be resurrected; but *'... afterward those who are Christ's at His coming [when He comes at the end of the world]. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. . . . Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.'**

Do you see from these verses that Christ is reigning at the right hand of God **now**, in His kingdom, and with His saints, and

that He will continue to reign until He comes in clouds to herald the end of this age? In 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8, Paul encouraged Christians who were being persecuted by saying, *'and to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'* Continuing, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, *'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.'*

This is a description of the end of this age: that Christ will come in the clouds with His mighty angels, and that the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and then those who are alive will be changed and will join them in the air. Peter, in 2 Peter 3:10-13, describes what will happen to this world: *'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to the promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.'*

So, Jesus and His apostles were continually teaching that His kingdom would be started during the lifetime of the apostles—and the promise was fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when the kingdom (which is also the church) was started. Since that day Christ has been reigning over His kingdom from heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God. (Read also Daniel 7:13,14 for a description of this scene.) The souls of the martyred dead are said to be reigning with Him, and we who are living in this world as a part of that kingdom are also reigning as kings and priests, according to Revelation 1:5. We reign with our Lord until His return when we will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds. He will then turn the

kingdom over to God, and God will reign over that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. But this earth on which we now live will be burned up, and the heavens will melt with fervent heat.

Consistently, Christ pointed His followers to the new spiritual world, to the new Jerusalem and the new kingdom of spiritual Israel. We—His church—are that new kingdom, and we are promised an eternal home in that new earth He is preparing. Why would anyone want to cling to an erroneous idea of a physical kingdom set up in the literal city of Jerusalem, in this sin-cursed world, when we are promised so much more?

In concluding our thoughts in the lesson tonight, Andrew said, "we want to answer the questions, 'But when will all of this happen? When will Jesus return? Will it be at a time set by some religious leader who says, 'Be prepared! The Lord is coming on such-and-such date! He has revealed it to me!'"

When Jesus' disciples asked Him when the end would come, He answered, *'But of that day and hour no one knows, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. . . . Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him'* (Matthew 24:36,44).

Those who claim special revelation today, who say that they know when Christ will return, are contradicting the very words of the Lord they claim to follow. They are making themselves to be as high as God, knowing what Jesus says only God knows! Let us beware of such false teachers, for they have no revelation! Instead, let us listen to the words of Christ and obey Him; *'Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him'* (Matthew 24:44).

Your Soul Is Precious

FRANCIS DAVID

God has made this wonderful world. The Psalmist says: "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." Yes our God is almighty and He is a great God. He also made man on His own image. He formed him of

the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Your soul is important before God because he is the one who created you and this part (Soul) will never die. Our souls will live forever in eternity. There are many who believe and teach the doctrine of evolution. We must know the fact that man did not come into this world through evolution. We are the wonderful creation of almighty and we did not come out of monkeys. You have a divine nature and that is why you want to worship the one who is supreme.

We must know that our souls are precious before God. Have you ever thought about it? There are many who are not concerned about it. For them the materialism is more important. They think that gaining the world or to make lots of profits in the world is the most essential thing. But you know what Jesus said when he was teaching the people, He said: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? When a man leaves this world he goes to eternity and one day he has to face the judgment. Once you have left this world, you have gone forever and you will not have second chance to change yourself. Sometime people think that they can live here as they please and then they will enter heaven because God is love and he is not going to send anyone to hell. We must understand that one day we have to give an account to God. Paul writes to Christians at Rome says: "So each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12).

What is your age now? You must be 30, 40 or 50 or maybe 80? But there would be a time when you have to say good bye to the world. This is a reality of life. We are made like this, there is a time to be born and there is a time to go from here forever. We may think that still there is a lot time left for us, so let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. . ." (I Cor. 15:32). James says: "For what is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanishes away." But you will live after death. The soul does not sleep in death.

We as Christians have assurance from God that even if we die we will live with him forever. We believe and trust God because he has given us hope of eternal life. Dear friend just think about yourself. How do you measure yourself before God? Are you upto His expectations? You know, many a times we

displease him through our wrong actions and deeds. We must come to Him with sincere hearts and obey his commands specified in His book, the Bible. If we do what He says, we will live with him in heaven which is His dwelling place.

God sent His only begotten Son into this world so that people may believe in him and have everlasting life through Him. (John 3:16). Jesus His son shed his blood on the cross to give us salvation. His salvation is for all human race. Do you believe in Jesus? If you want to live with Jesus in heaven then I urge you to believe in him, confess him as God's son, repent of your sinful life and be baptised in the watery grave for the forgiveness of your sins. When you obey these command you will be added to the Lord's church by the Lord Himself and then you will be a Christian.

After becoming a Christian, we must be faithful to the Lord. We must keep ourselves spotless from the world. Jesus said: "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10). We must not neglect our souls. Your soul is precious. You are precious in God's sight. One day the death will come to me and you so therefore we must be ready to face God and we need to prepare ourselves to meet him. Prophet Amos says: "Prepare to meet your God . . . (Amos 4:12).

The Source Of Our Blessings

J.K. GOSSETT

The Psalmist of ancient Israel wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore" (Psalm 121). Fleshly Israel was dependent upon God for their blessings and this passage beautifully expresses this fact.

James wrote: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Guy N. Woods makes the following comment on this verse: "All that is good ultimately derives from God, the inexhaustible source of all blessings. For this fact we should ever be grateful; and we should express and exhibit our gratitude in word and in deed daily. Many people never pause to express thanks for the bounties which they regularly receive from God's hand. Like pigs, they eat their food, never lifting their eyes to the tree from which the acorns fall! A father, in the presence of his family, boasted that he offered thanks for their food every Christmas day. It is for them quite fortunate that God does not forget to feed them except on "Christmas day!"

The blessings which come from God are in two realms: the material and the spiritual. Christians, and those who are not Christians, participate in, and enjoy God's physical blessings. Indeed God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). However, God's spiritual blessings can be possessed and enjoyed only by those who are "in Christ." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). The following word of caution is in order: One should not presume that he is right with God, spiritually, just because he is prospering materially.

The Lord's spiritual blessings are predicated upon faith and obedience. The grace of God is both unmerited and conditional. Hence, "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT" (Romans 8:1).

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15).

Let The Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

How can one be saved from sin? Only by coming to Jesus!

The Lord said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"* (John 14:6). The apostle Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, said concerning Jesus, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). If one desires salvation, it is only found in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

The source of man's salvation is God and His grace. The word grace means unmerited favour. Therefore, it is by God's unmerited favour that salvation has been made available to all. God was not obligated to offer salvation; He did it because of His grace, mercy, and love. One needs to realize that *"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23) and that sin separates one spiritually from God (Is. 59:1-2). But God paid the price for man's sin by the atoning death of His only begotten Son on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). Therefore, God is the source of man's salvation; without His grace, all who have sinned (and all accountable people have) would be lost.

Man has a part in his salvation. Yes, man is saved by grace, but not grace only! Man's part is not the source; God is, but man must access God's grace by an obedient faith (Rom. 5:2). The apostle Paul wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"* (Rom. 1:16). Paul would later write, *"But they have not all obeyed the gospel"* (Rom. 10:16). Therefore, man's part is obedience to the gospel of Christ. When one obeys the gospel, he is coming to Christ. If one refuses, he is not following Christ and, therefore, cannot come to the Father (John 14:6).

What does God's gospel involve as far as being born of God? John 6:44-45 tells us we must be drawn of God by being taught of Him. (See also Rom. 10:17). Upon belief (John 1:12), the Holy Spirit informs us in His word (The Bible) that unless one repents of his sins he cannot be saved (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). Too, man is taught that he must confess his belief in Christ (Rom. 10:10; Mt. 10:32). All of these things (belief, repentance, and confession) are works. They are not works of merit or of human origin but of righteousness of God. (See Psalm 119:172). When one believes, repents and confesses from the heart, he is performing works of righteousness. He is obeying what the Lord said to do. These

works do not take away from his grace, but depend on it (read James 2:14-24). Jesus was asked, "*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*" He responded, "*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent*" (John 6:28-29). Belief is a work! Therefore, man must do something. Some teach that man does not do anything to access God's grace. But Jesus said faith is a work. Likewise, the Holy Spirit says that one is saved by baptism (1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is a work of God (man did not come up with it; God did). When one from the heart believes in Christ, repents of his sins, confesses Christ as Lord, and is immersed into Christ, he has been spiritually born again (John 3:3-5; Eph. 5:26) and brought into covenant relationship with God (Acts 2:41,47; Gal. 3:26-27). These works of righteousness are not the source of our salvation; God's mercy is, but one accesses God's mercy by these works (Titus 3:5). We encourage you to save yourself from this unto ward generation (Acts 2:40) by coming to Jesus. Only He can save!

Salvation: God's Gift and Man's Responsibility

THOMAS F. EAVES SR.

The Bible present the salvation of mankind from at least four different viewpoints.

I. SALVATION IN PROPHECY

Salvation through Jesus Christ was prophesied in Genesis 3:15 and in promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. "and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Salvation in prophecy can be viewed in Isaiah 7:14 and its fulfillment in Matthew 1:21-23. Perhaps the most detailed prophecy of salvation through Jesus Christ is recorded in Isaiah 53.

In fulfillment of the prophetic salvation, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to pay the price for man's redemption (John 3:16). Shedding His precious blood on Calvary's cross, he entered a Holy Place not made with hands and there once and for all obtained eternal redemption for mankind (Hebrews 9:11-12; 9:23-26; 10:12).

III. MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

All men have the responsibility to seek God. Evidence for God's existence is available to all (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18-23). The Word of God instructs us that man is to be active in seeking for God. "That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:24-28 - verse 27 quoted: see also Romans 6:16 and Matthew 5:6).

IV. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN EVANGELISM

The responsibility of the church in evangelism is two-fold. The church is to make known the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10-11), by preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). The church is also responsible for showing the world the religion of Jesus Christ through example. Jesus, in His great Sermon on the Mount, stated, "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Timothy was instructed, "... But be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12). The apostle Paul declared to the Corinthian church, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1).

Christians and congregations should not become discouraged when their evangelistic efforts do not result in conversions or public responses, but should keep on preaching God's message of salvation, for Paul wrote, "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). There are some honest souls who are seeking the way of righteousness and when these good and honest hearts (Luke 8:15) come in contact with the pure Gospel

of Jesus Christ, a precious soul will be delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13).

Forgetting Our Purpose

JOHN GIPSON

Most people have a more rounded education than mine. They read the comics—something I haven't done since Dick Tracy, Dagwood and Blondie, Smilin' Jack and Li'l Abner. I guess I just got out of the habit.

However, a few years ago, Allen Isbel sent me a comic strip entitled KUDZU by Doug Marlette. Since that time, I can proudly say that I read one comic strip each day.

A recent offering shows the preacher, holding his Bible, standing in front of the church house door. A rather large and aggressive lady has him cornered, and she is giving him what for. "What—No tanning salon?! . . . No juice bar! . . . No food court! . . . No fitness center! . . . No jacuzzi! . . . No sauna! . . . No skating rink! . . . AND YOU CALL YOURSELF A HOUSE OF WORSHIP!"

This brought to mind a time when Jesus went in the temple and found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, along with the moneychangers at their business. You can imagine the noise, odor, and general commotion. The atmosphere must have been somewhat like a country fair, or carnival. Was Jesus pleased? Hardly! he cleaned them out—lock, stock, and barrel.

God's intention was that the house which was called by His name should "be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). But, in time, the original purpose had been largely forgotten. God's house had become a house of trade occupied by a den of robbers.

And, if we are not careful, we will repeat the same mistake and forget what God's house (the church) is all about today.

The Quicker The Better?

T. PIERCE BROWN

We are a "fast food" generation. Grocery stores are trying to figure ways to more quickly get us through the checkout line. Banks put in ATM machines. An old computer that seemed incredibly fast yesterday seems as slow as Christmas today. Instant coffee is too slow. We have lights that turn on automatically before you even touch the switch.

We learn some different principles when we look carefully in the Bible. It is true that there are things that we should have done yesterday. We are warned of the dangers of assuming there will be time tomorrow, or when we get around to it. Paul says, "Now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2).

However, there are stories in the Bible that show that the quickest way is not always the best way. In Exodus 13:17, "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt."

It might have seemed logical from man's viewpoint that anyone leading that multitude out of bondage should take the quickest way out. God knew better. There may be at least two reasons for God's decision. First, the shortest route would have been through the Philistine country where they might see or be engaged in war, which would discourage them, and perhaps destroy many of them. Second, they had been a captive people, beaten down and deprived of their rights of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, political, religious, and social freedom. They were too immature in these areas to know how to make intelligent choices. (They apparently never did learn how to make them.) There is a principle here of which we need to be aware and appreciate.

That is God is more concerned about developing a person with spirituality, discipline, a Christ-like personality and maturity than He is with some instant appearance of success. Church

leaders and all members need to learn this. It takes more time to grow an oak tree than it does to grow a squash. We have too much "squash" in the church now. Peter and Paul revealed that to us in many passages. In II Peter 1:5, where we are told to give all diligence to add to our faith various "Christian graces," it is evident that he wants us to "go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance toward God" (Hebrews 6:2). When Paul says in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to "grow up on all things into Him," he expressed the same idea. James shows that difficulties and hard times that try our faith can be important when he says, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2).

God may be trying to do something with us. Have we grown impatient with God because He did not let us do things we wanted? do we think we have a thorn in the flesh that is so much worse than Paul's which God cannot overrule for our good? God has something great for each of us, but we just cannot get to it by trying to take the quickest or shortest route. There are no shortcuts of God's way. We need not expect to get to the top of the mountain without going through the valley. We may need to go through the wilderness in order to be disciplined and prepared for the Promised Land. Are we willing to trust in God and always move by His direction?

Spiritual Worship

WALTER SWAIN

When Jesus talked to the woman at the well in Samaria, He revealed a great truth concerning Christian worship. She has asked Him a question about where she ought to worship God—at Samaria or Jerusalem. Jesus' answer indicated the *how* one worships God is more important than *where* one worships God.

Samaritan worship had originated during the Jews' return from Babylonian captivity. When they were refused the opportunity to assist the Jews in rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple, they returned to Samaria and built their own place of worship. There they worshipped until Jesus' day.

The Samaritan woman, perceiving Christ to be a prophet, raised the question of which place was the proper place to worship God in that day. But, Jesus' answer focused not on the worship of the Jews, but on the worship of the coming Christian age. Jesus spoke of *how* that worship was to be offered (John 4:19-24).

Two essential matters are involved in how we are to worship God today. These are: (1) An understanding of the *nature* of Christian worship, which is "in spirit"; and (2) An understanding of the *purpose* of Christian worship, which is "in truth." Worship is not acceptable to God today unless both of these elements are present.

The object of our worship determines the nature of our worship. Jesus said God is a Spirit, therefore, we must worship Him in spirit. "Spirit" refers to that which goes on inside of us. This is often referred to in Scripture as the "heart," or the "inner man." The emphasis of Christian worship is on what goes on inside our minds when we worship. In referring to singing, Paul said we are to make melody "with your heart" (Ephesians 5:19).

The fourteenth chapter of I Corinthians deals with Christian worship; specifically with what goes on in the assembly. Paul mentions three things here which must occur if worship is to be spiritual. It must be done with *understanding* (verse 15). It must be such as *edifies*. or builds up (verse 26). And it must be done *decently and in order* (verse 40). Unless this is true, worship can not be spiritual in nature.

Secondly, worship must be expressed outwardly with the proper forms; and according to the pattern given by God for worship in the Christian age. In other words, it must be done "in truth." Four things should be noted in this regard.

(1) We must worship in obedience to God. This fact is established in the very first acts of worship in the Bible. Cain did not obey God's command to offer an animal sacrifice. Abel obeyed God (Hebrews 11:4). God refused Cain's offering and told him to change and make it right.

(2) We must worship only by what God has commanded us to use in worship. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" to God, one which He had "not commanded." This was refused, and they were killed by God. God does not accept anything in worship that He has not commanded to be used (Matthew 15:7-9).

(3) Worship must honour and praise God. God is the audience in worship. We do not worship to entertain, or be entertained. All worship is to *Please* God, not man. We are to give Him the honor and the glory.

(4) We must understand that each act of worship has a purpose. The Lord's Supper is to remember the death of Christ and proclaim it until He comes. Preaching, reading and teaching of the Word is to let God speak to us. Praying is to speak to God. Singing is to speak to God and one another. And, giving is to allow us to express our love to God and to help support the work of the church.

Little did the Samaritan woman at the well realize the import of what Jesus told her that day. But, John's recording of Jesus' words allows us to know what Jesus said and the great impact these words have on our worship today. How we worship God is primary importance to our Christian growth and the acceptance of our worship by God. Let us always worship in spirit and in truth.

Paul's Declaration of the Gospel

FRED DILLON

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Paul declared the Gospel.

It was that which he preached.

It was that they had received at Corinth.

And, it was in the Gospel they stood, the basis or foundation of their faith.

It was that by which they were saved (Romans 1:16), as long as they held fast to it (Revelation 2:10b).

Then, the beloved Apostle, directed by the Holy Spirit of God, provides an accurate and complete view of the Gospel—the Gospel they had received:

“Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures . . .”

Even Paul himself was an eye witness of Christ and yet he still relied on the Scriptures.

“And that He was buried,”

“And that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.”

Paul didn't stop there in his declaration of the Gospel. He took time to enumerate the eye witnesses among whom he was the last to see the risen Lord, “as one born out of due time.”

“He was seen of Cephas” (Peter of the twelve - I Corinthians 15:5),

“Then of the twelve.” Actually, at this time, Judas was dead.

“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present.”

“After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.”

We know further from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28:9-10, that “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary,” both saw the Lord and heard Him speak even before He appeared to the apostles.

The Gospel is that which Jesus wanted preached to “every creature under heaven” (Mark 16:15-16).

The Gospel is the “power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

The Gospel is that which must be obeyed by man or dire consequences will result (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Gospel is that by which men are called to follow Christ (II Thessalonians 2:14). The Gospel is that by which we obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is that Word which endures forever (I Peter 1:25). The philosophies and traditions of men will not do (Colossians 2:8).

The doctrines and commandments of men are vain (Mark 7:7).

If men are to be saved, redeemed, forgiven, and have hope, they must confront the Gospel of Christ somewhere along the way. They must obey from the heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered unto them (Romans 6:17). Then, and only then, can they be set free from sin and death and become the

"servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18).

Paul was so emphatic about the Gospel, "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (I Corinthians 9:16).

The charge to preach the Gospel continues in effect as long as the world stands. May all of us do our part while we are here.

Fellowship Of The Body

TOM KELTON

The fellowship of the body of Christ is the mutual care and concern its members have for each other. That care and concern is expressed in the "one another" passages of the new Testament. We are to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16); build up one another (I Thessalonians 5:11); bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2); pray for one another (James 5:16); be kind of one another (Ephesians 4:32); submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21); show hospitality to one another (I Peter 4:9); serve one another (Galatians 5:13); comfort one another (I Thessalonians 4:18); restore one another (Galatians 6:1); forgive one another (Colossians 3:13); admonish one another (Romans 15:14); teach one another (Colossians 3:16); encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13); and, above all, love one another (I Peter 1:22; I John 4:7, 11).

There is a lot more to Biblical fellowship than drinking coffee and eating sandwiches in a fellowship hall. True fellowship takes place when Christians come together to minister to one another.

In a normal, healthy human body, all the members work together. If they don't, that body is disabled, unable to function normally. No single part functions independently of the rest. So, also is the body of Christ. All the members must work together if the body is to function normally. And, no members was meant to function in isolation from the rest of the body; the New Testament knew nothing of Christians who weren't part of a local assembly. God never intended the assembly to be a place where lonely people come on Sunday, sit alone among the crowd, and

leave, still lonely and hurting. Rather, in the assembly, warm intimate fellowship should take place.

When each member functions properly, the body is strong and healthy. And, that will be a powerful example that the world can't keep from noticing.

The Holy Spirit And The Word Of God

CHARLES E. COBB

All that we can know in this life about the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Bible. Guesses will not do. Presumptions will not work. Human authority cannot suffice. All that we can know is that which we find in the Word of God.

Men are not satisfied, however, with that which the Word reveals. There is a desire to speculate, fantasize, "fix it like we want it." Though a study of the Word would be adequate to enlighten us about the Holy Spirit and His Word, yet many want an operation of the Spirit that is separate and apart from that which God has made known to us.

Numerous speculations and theories have been set forth—and continue to be set forth—about the role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is in the life of the child of God. This does not in any way affirm, however, that the child of God is enabled to do miracles, wonders, and signs as were the apostles of Jesus. The Spirit's indwelling of the Christian is not an emotional high or a miraculous power. Many claims are made by some of the religious charlatans of the day but without genuine confirmation or results.

If God had not revealed the truth to us in the Bible about the person and work of the Spirit, we would know nothing of Him. In fact, we would not even know if there is the Spirit.

God has spoken to us by His Son. We must trust what He has said.

May we be content to follow the teaching of the Bible and not be lured from the truth by the speculations or unfounded actions of men.

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