

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### **What Does The Bible Teach?**

***“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”***

Matthew, one of the disciples of Christ, wrote these words of Christ, almost two thousand years ago, in Matthew 16:26. But how true it is even today! The great truth taught in this particular passage of the Scripture is the fact that nothing in this world is more precious, more valuable, and more important than the soul of a human being. The Bible teaches, and every person on earth need to realize the fact, that God, in the beginning had created man in His own image and after His own likeness. That is to say, man, like God, is a spiritual being, and that in the beginning he was sinless like God. (Genesis 1:26,27 & 2:7). Man's spirit or soul never dies, that is, never ceases to exist. Spiritually man is always going to exist. As man's spirit or the soul leaves the body at the point of death, the body returns to earth from which it was originally created, the soul returns to God or to the place appointed by God for the soul. (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:19-31).

What really matters is the fact that in what condition does the soul of man returns to the place appointed by God? A soul is either saved in Christ or lost in sin. The one saved is destined to

go to heaven, but the one lost will end up in hell. The Bible teaches the great truth that: While man worries about the body, God worries about his soul. He was so concerned about the soul of man that in Christ He came down on earth and gave Himself to propitiate for man's sins. Because sin causes the soul to be lost. (Isaiah 59:1,2; Romans 3:23). And what profit will it be to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Yet, the saddest fact of the whole humanity is that in the pursuit of the things on earth, such as education, business, job, money and other such things which seems important to man, man is unconcerned about his soul. This is not to say, though, that those things, such as, education, business, job and money etc., are not necessary. But to put them above the soul's need of salvation from sin is a grave mistake. Man's first and foremost priority should be to think about the welfare of the soul. Christ put it in this way: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33). Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness means to seek for those things which are valuable and important in the sight of God. Seeking His will, obeying His commandments, and doing those things which are important in His sight. Man always think of his body and about things which are required for the body. But God is always concerned about the soul of man. Once when people came to Christ seeking food for the body, he told them: "Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:27). **God's love should not be measured by food and clothing and shelter and things of the world, but the fact that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross to redeem every person from the curse of sin, demonstrates His real and genuine and immense love for each one of us.** But even when God has done so much for man, what will a man profit if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul, or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

# *The Two Covenants*

J.C. CHOATE

A covenant is an agreement or a law. In this study we are discussing agreements between God and man, laws that God has given to man. There are two covenants with which man is primarily concerned. One is found in the Old Testament and is often referred to as the Law of Moses. The other is found in the New Testament and is called the Law of Christ.

The statement was made that man today is concerned with both of these laws, though one would wonder, "Why would people be equally concerned about two laws, when one is designated 'old' and the other 'new'? Don't the very names show that the second has replaced the first?" But there are many in the world today who believe that we must keep *both* of these laws, if we are to be pleasing to God. The purpose of this study will be to see what the Bible itself teaches on this subject.

We need to realize that God gave both of these covenants or laws, but He gave them at **different times**, to **different peoples**, and for **different purposes**. *Fifteen hundred years* before the coming of Christ, God made a covenant with *the nation of Israel* that we call the law of Moses. This law served as a *preparation* for Israel and for the world, for the coming of Christ.

Just as Christ is greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6), so the law He brought superceded and replaced the law that was given through Moses. This means, then, that that first law is no longer binding.

Though some people today try to do it, we cannot actually live under two laws at the same time! Have you thought about that! Most of those who were born under the law of Moses were unable to live under the law of Christ because they had died before Jesus' law came into force. Only the comparative few who were living at the time of the changing of the law were able to make the transition from the law of Moses to the law of Christ. *None, however, who were born after the coming of the law of Christ were able to go back to the law of Moses and live by that earlier law and be acceptable to God.* Neither can we who are living today go back to the law of Moses and have God's approval.

Some people mistakenly go back to the law of Moses to justify their observance of the Sabbath Day, their use of musical instruments in worship, and their practice of tithing. However, they try to explain away their failure to offer animal sacrifices and to keep other commands of the law, saying that "the ceremonial law is no longer binding." But the Scriptures nowhere bind one part of the Law of Moses and discard other parts. Galatians 5:3 states that those who would keep one command of the law are bound to keep *the whole law*.

We cannot, however, keep any part of the law since **all of it was done away** when Christ died on the cross. Paul explained, "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*" (Colossians 2:14).

The scriptures say that when Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. This was symbolic of the fact that Christ had entered the "Holy of Holies" as High Priest for us, and that the law of Moses had come to an end (Matthew 26:51).

At the time of Christ's death, He made a revealing statement, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). The work Christ had come to do had been finished—fulfilling the Old Law and replacing it with His New Law—thus ushering in the "last days."

The Hebrew writer described it like this: "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*" (Hebrews 1:1,2). The writer is saying that in the past God had spoken to man in different ways through different people, but in these last days—the days in which we presently live—He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus.

In further showing the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Hebrew writer goes on to say, "*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and*

of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

*“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth”* (Hebrews 9:11-17).

Continuing to discuss the difference in the laws, the Hebrews writer says, *“In burnt offerings and sacrifices for the sin thou hast had not pleasure. . . . Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Hebrews 10:4-10).

Jesus, therefore, is our Lord and Saviour today. No other law or covenant can match His. Who could want more?

*Especially For Women*

## **Search For Truth Development of the Church**

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

Good things were happening in the church with the passing of the years. The congregation in Bandra had saved and borrowed money so that property could be purchased and a building was constructed. There was adequate space for growth for the congregation which numbered almost three hundred now, even though several families had started meeting on the other side of town some years back and a thriving congregation had developed there as well, enabling the church to give more atten-

tion to reaching the people in that area. The church in Suddoth had taken root and developed to be able to provide for its own preaching and evangelism. The members had even constructed a building for their worship and other activities. Promising congregations also existed in five other neighboring towns.

On a monthly basis, according to a scheduled plan, all who could would gather at one of the meeting places and then they would go out to cover as much of the town as possible with literature and invitations to attend the special meeting which would be conducted that night in that place. In this way, once or twice a year, most of the people in each community were reminded of the church's existence. After an enthusiastic singing and preaching service, there would be a time of fellowship, of light refreshments and opportunity to get to know any visitors who had come for the meeting. This had proved to be a very effective means of spreading the news of the gospel, of increasing the size of each congregation, and of increasing the fellowship among the brethren throughout the area.

"Isn't it exciting," Rachel asked Andrew one night, going home from such a meeting in Suddoth, "to think of how the Lord's church has grown and of how many brothers and sisters we have now?"

"Yes," answered Andrew. "I'm so thankful for Timothy and the seriousness he brought to our lives. If it hadn't been for his birth, we might have wasted all of our energy and years, just working for material possessions that will be burned up with this earth—and we would have lost our souls! What a narrow escape!"

"Last night he was asking me if he's old enough to obey the gospel yet, Andrew. To me he seems so young, yet he's fourteen. I'm sure he'll be making that commitment soon, and Titus won't be far behind him. They're good boys. And they've been blessed to have the love and security of Christian parents. The work of God and the study of His word is all they've ever known! But there's no greater gift we could have given them!"

"Not only are the boys maturing," answered Andrew. "The church is maturing too. John was suggesting that we invite the brethren from all the congregations, since we're centrally located, and have a week's meetings for serious study about the development of elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers, so

that all of us can share our thoughts and all can benefit by working together to a greater degree of maturity, especially in our organization as congregations. Though the church in Bandra is fourteen years old, and a number of the men are old enough in the faith, and have children who have also been baptized, no elders and deacons have been appointed anywhere yet."

The idea was circulated among the congregations. On the first night of the meetings, everyone was overjoyed to see the crowd of people who had gathered—more than six hundred! How thrilling it was to realize such strength, to hear such beautiful singing, and to enjoy such warmth of fellowship!

Andrew addressed the entire group, explaining the purpose of the gathering and the plan for study. "We know that we read in the New Testament of various works and responsibilities in the church. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, we are told of elders and deacons, and of their work and qualifications. We read also in Acts 20:28 that the elders are to feed the church, and to take care of the flock which has been entrusted to their care. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, we see further instructions to the elders in the church. Paul sent Titus on a journey to Crete, to appoint elders in every city, so we know that this is the plan God had for the church. Until we complete His plan of organization, we have not fully obeyed Him, and we aren't functioning as He would have us to do.

"We know, too, that the church must have evangelists, preachers, and teachers. We see examples of these works in Paul and the other apostles, in Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Aquila, and Priscilla. We read commands that the older women are to teach the younger women and the children, that the older men are to teach the younger men to be sober and exemplary of good works, so that the word of God will not be blasphemed.

"During this week, we have arranged individual classes for instruction in these various topics, and you may choose which ones would benefit you most. We have classes for those who want to develop to be elders; another for men who would qualify to be deacons. Some among us have been preaching the word for years, alongside our secular work, but there's a need for men (with the help of their wives) to give their full time to evangelism—traveling to new areas and planting churches—and there's a need for men to work with the congregations we've already

begun, to give all of their time to study and teaching in homes, so that the church will grow faster. Having men to do this work, though, doesn't mean that we as individual Christians will do less—we can't hire someone else to do our work for us. But just as Paul on occasions was supported so that he could be free to give all of his time to evangelism, and churches sent money to cover his needs (Philippians 4:15), we can do the same today.

"I think we've done well in each congregation with developing classes for our children, realizing the importance of teaching them the truth from their earliest days. Because of that, we have some experienced teachers who are going to be training those who would like to learn how to teach the various age groups."

The week was a time of tremendous spiritual growth for all who participated. The result was that members went back to the individual congregations and began to apply what they had learned. Within a very short period of time three of the congregations—after careful study of the meaning of the qualifications laid down for elders and deacons—had selected men for those offices and they had been approved by the members of the congregation which they were to shepherd. From the beginning, the men took their responsibilities seriously, meeting regularly to discuss plans for the outreach and growth of the church in their area, and praying about any problems which they saw among the Christians for whom they knew they would one day answer to God.

Out of the meetings, also, four of the men began to study in preparation for leaving their secular work to devote all of their time to teaching and working with local congregations. There was great excitement about the growth expected from the work they would be able to do. Inspired by their example, two of the young unmarried men decided to prepare themselves for the work of evangelism. With these six wanting to have concentrated studies, Andrew and John offered to begin formal classes three nights a week, using the libraries they had built up over the years, and sharing the knowledge they had gained through their own studies. The classes proved to be so beneficial that, as word spread about them, several others began to attend. Rachel volunteered to have studies with any of the wives who were interested in improving their knowledge of the particular work of women, and gaining practice in teaching individually.



One night, tired from the long day of work and the challenge of the special classes, Rachel and Andrew were preparing for bed. "I was thinking tonight, Rachel, as I looked at those young men in my class, that with these years of growth, the church in this area is on solid ground. Even if we died, there are others, strong in the faith, who would continue to spread the word!"

## *The Devil Is After You*

**FRANCIS DAVID**

The devil is active from the beginning. He first worked on Adam and Eve and we read in the book of Genesis that how they were deceived by devil. He persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. The devil also tried to work on our Lord, when he was fasting alone in the wilderness. But Jesus resisted him and told him: "Away with you, Satan." We read in the Scriptures that the devil left him." (Matt. 4:10-11).

The word of God tells us that he is an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14); he is father of lies (John 8:44); he is god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), and prince of this world (John 14:30). We need to be careful and guard our selves because he is seeking people to trap them to do wrong. In First Peter 5:8, we read and it says: "be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Today we see, there are worlds of people following him. He is really happy when people do wrong and go against God's will. He likes people those who are immoral, covetous, or extortioners, drunkards etc.

He tempts people through lust of the flesh. The Bible says: "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the world." Today what we see in the world, there is so much materialism, worldliness, and no spirituality among people. People are leaving the spirituality and going after the ways of the devil. The devil is showing people all kinds of worldly attractions and asking them to follow him. He is keeping people away from God and he does not want that

people should come to Christ. He is telling people that there is no power in the gospel. The Bible says: "There is power in the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 1:16).

He is happy when Christians leave their faith and go back into the world. He likes to see God's children to leave the church and follow the world. We as Christians must guard ourselves. In Ephesians chapter 6 apostle Paul says: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Verses 10-13). Unless we guard ourselves we wouldn't be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Another thing that we see the devil does, he is stopping people to be faithful to the Lord and His church. There are many who have obeyed the gospel but they are no more faithful to him. They do not participate in the work of the Lord. They seldom come for the worship. For them Christian worship and other services of the church are not important. You know, the devil tells them to stay back home and enjoy T.V. programs, entertain relatives and friends and there is no need of going for worship. He is not happy when Christians grow in their faith.

What about you? Are you able to stand against devil and his devices? We can resist him and James gives us good advise by telling us that we must resist him and he will flee from us (James 4:7). We can be victorious over devil. Try our best not to give place to the devil to harm us. (Eph. 4:27). God has provided us a way of escape from devil. Apostle Paul says: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Yes, you can resist him and do not allow him to deceive you. Remember the devil is after you, so be careful, guard yourself and take heed, this was apostle Paul's instruction as he says: "Therefore let him who think he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12).

# **Jerusalem**

*(the place where God put his name)*

**J.K. GOSSETT**

David reigned for thirty-three years in Jerusalem; Solomon's temple was built in this city; and in this place God put his name. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple makes several references to the fact that God put his name in a certain place (Read 1 Kings 8). For example: "Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant . . . that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, **MY NAME SHALL BE THERE**: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this **PLACE**" (VV. 28-29).

When Daniel was in Babylon, he prayed three times a day with his "windows being open in his chamber **TOWARD JERUSALEM**" (Daniel 6:10). In another place he prayed: "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city with is **CALLED BY THY NAME**: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness but for thy mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive: O Lord hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are **CALLED BY THY NAME**" (Daniel 9:18-19).

Neither Solomon nor Daniel thought that one city was as "good" as another. God put his name in Jerusalem!

Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem (the city where God put his name) every year at the feast of the passover (Luke 2:4). We read in another place: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to **JERUSALEM**" (John 2:13).

On the day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast) of Acts 2, "There were dwelling at **JERUSALEM** Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Question: Why were these devout men not gathered in some **OTHER** city?

The Ethiopian of Acts 8 had been to **JERUSALEM** to worship (V. 27). Why had he not traveled to some other city, or even stayed at home? Because God had put His name there.

Acts 4:12 says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

# *Let the Bible Answer*

ROBERT MEREDITH

What is the work of an eldership? The Holy Spirit has revealed in God's word that each congregation of God's people should be shepherded by a plurality of men who meet certain qualifications (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). In Scripture these men are called: elders—1 Pet. 5:1; bishops—1 Tim. 3:1; overseers—Acts 20:28; pastors—Eph. 4:11; the presbytery—1 Tim. 4:14. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Head of the church (Col. 1:18) and that when a congregation of His people have men who are qualified and desire the office/work of an elder, that they should be scripturally organized (Elders with the oversight and deacons serving in a special capacity). Let us notice what the work of an eldership is.

There are basically four areas of work. Elders are to oversee the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:5). Overseers rule (Rom. 12:8), plan the work, and guide the flock. They do what the word implies, oversee the congregation and her labours in the Lord's Kingdom. A second responsibility given to the church (1 Pet. 2:2). Elders not only should teach (1 Tim. 3:2), but are also responsible for who is teaching/preaching the Word. They need to be sure that only faithful preaching is done. A third duty of elders is the watching over the souls under their care. The Hebrew writer penned, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls . . .*" (Heb. 13:17). This involves knowing the congregation and meeting their needs. It also entails church discipline when required (1 Cor. 5:1-5; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess 3:6). The fourth areas of work is that of protecting the flock. Just as a shepherd protects the sheep under his care (1 Sam. 17:34-35), so should those entrusted by the Holy Spirit with the care of God's sheep. The elders can protect the congregation by warning of false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-3), by being informed themselves of spiritual dangers (Hosea 4:6), and by stopping the mouths of the false teachers (Titus 1:9-11).

The work of an elder is the greatest work upon the earth. Let us pray for and encourage these men who oversee, feed, watch over the souls, and protect the church.

# Truth

FRED DILLON

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (II Timothy 3:16).

"If you continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

"Howbeit, when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . ." (John 16:13).

The Godhead has spoken! God's Word is truth (John 17:17). "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

When men challenge the Bible, Old or New Testament, they must answer to Almighty God Himself to God the Son and to the Holy Spirit of God. The Scriptures of the New Testament, the perfect law of liberty, came from God to us through His Son Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, and were revealed to mortal man by the Holy Spirit of God sent from the Father in the name of His Son (John 14:26).

God sent His Son to bring truth to the world along with the salvation and redemption of the souls of men. Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6). His Word is truth! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth . . . and we "purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (I Peter 1:22).

This truth can and does make us free from sin and death, but it must be heard (John 6:45); it must be believed (John 8:24) and it must be obeyed (I Peter 1:22-23).

The Holy Spirit came to guide men into all truth (John 16:13) to "teach all things" and bring "all things to remembrance. . ." (John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13). How then can men argue with the Scriptures? The worst mistake human kind can make is to reject the truth. God's Word is not only truth, but the only true standard of truth. Those who reject Christ, reject truth and will face eternal consequences (John 12:48).

The God of truth sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins, to be buried and to be resurrected to prove the victory of truth over error, righteousness over unrighteousness, good over evil. God's part has long ago been accomplished through the offering of the blood of Jesus once for all. "He entered in once

into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). Jesus offered Himself without spot to God, purging our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

When we reject truth, we reject God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. We turn our backs on the Godhead.

When men deny that Jesus promised the church (Matthew 16:18), they reject Christ and the truth. When men reject the fact that Christ purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28), they reject Christ and the truth. When men fail to understand that Christ adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), they deny Christ and the truth.

When religionists fail to understand that there is "one body," and that the church of Christ is that body, they deny Christ and the truth (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

Men in our day are in the business of rejecting truth and adopting their own philosophies, doctrines, creeds and dogmas, far removed from truth. This is true when we consider their false ideas of salvation without truth; worship not in spirit nor in truth, and ungodly lives dictated by the customs and traditions of men, living in rebellion against the Bible and all the hope it promises.

The beloved apostle John spoke in his letters and in his Gospel about two main topics—truth and love which are inseparable in God's divine plan for mankind's redemption. Love is not real love without truth and truth is based on the love of God for mankind made perfect through His Son.

John wrote, "But who so keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (I John 2:5). Again, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father" (II John 4). Finally, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4).

Is there any question then that we should HEAR the truth and LEARN the truth" (John 6:45)? Should there be any doubt that we should BELIEVE the truth that Jesus is the Son of God" (Matthew 16:16)? Is there any possible escaping the fact that men must repent of sins, (Luke 13:3,5); confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33); and be baptized "into Christ" for salvation" (Romans 6:3-5; Mark 16: 15-16; I Peter 3:21)? Is it any wonder that the wise man Solomon advised, "buy the truth and sell it not"

(Proverbs 23:23)?

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Proverbs 3:3). "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

## **Rebirth With Christ**

**WALTER SWAIN**

When a Jewish ruler named Nicodemus came to Jesus one night long ago, Jesus told him about the necessity of a new birth to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:1-6). But, how and when that birth takes place has been discussed and debated many times since that night. Even Nicodemus did not understand what Christ meant, and He had to explain it to him then. Many today do not grasp the meaning of the new birth.

Nicodemus, raised a Jew, believed one became what they were religiously by natural birth. A Jew was born a Jew. A Gentile was born a Gentile. But, Jesus introduced him to a new concept. He explained to Nicodemus that he spoke of a spiritual rebirth, not a physical one. This rebirth was to be "of water and the Spirit" (verse 5). He went on to use the illustration of the wind, which we do not see, but know it is there by the effects that it produces. Such is the birth of the Spirit.

The new birth is a personal spiritual experience. Each person must be born again spiritually to enter God's Kingdom, the church. We do not become Christians by osmosis, because of our parents, or by what the dominant religion of the community is. It is by our own choice and action.

Three things are involved in this spiritual experience.

FIRST, a *death* must take place. Death is a separation. We must be separated from sin to become a Christian. Paul refers to this separation in Galatians 2:20 in regard to his own experience in becoming a Christian. In Colossians 3:3, he reminds the Colossian Christians that they had died in their conversion to Christ. In Romans 6:5, he relates that in baptism we unite ourselves with Christ in the likeness of His death. In verse 4 of this chapter, he writes, "We were buried therefore with Him

through baptism into death." We must die to sin before we can be born again.

SECONDLY, a *burial* must occur. When one dies physically, we have to get rid of the body. After three days, it begins to decay and smell, so we bury it. Paul declares we are "buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death" (Romans 6:4). In Colossians 2:12 he wrote, "having been buried with Him in baptism." Baptism is a burial. The Greek word translated as "baptism" means to immerse, plunge, or dip. In Acts 8, the Ethiopian went down into the water and was immersed and came up out of the water (verse 38). In doing so, he buried the old man of sin (Romans 6:6). We must bury the old man of sin before we can be born again.

THIRDLY, a *resurrection* must take place. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:5-6, "Even when we were dead through our trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Colossians 3:1 refers to Christians having been "raised together with Christ." Romans 6:4 says we are raised from baptism to walk in newness of life.

Christ told Nicodemus that dark night that spiritual regeneration must create a new spiritual being if we are to partake of God's Kingdom. That regeneration was to be "of water and the Spirit." Each one is born again when they are baptized into Christ, as penitent believers, for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). This experience allows each to share in Jesus' own death, burial, and resurrection. Through this experience, one receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Romans 8:9-11), which sustains spiritual life. One is born again into a new spiritual life, and God adds one to the church, the Kingdom (Acts 2:47). Thus, the water Jesus spoke of is the water of baptism and the Spirit is the Holy Spirit Who enters one at baptism. In baptism, we share our new birth experience with Jesus and enter God's glorious Kingdom.



# *Jesus Humbled Himself*

**CHARLES BOX**

Jesus left heaven, left the presence of God, the Father, came to live among sinful people and finally died on a cruel cross to make salvation possible. Without Jesus, mankind would be helplessly lost. In order for Jesus to come and dwell among us and die for us, He humbled Himself. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 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 bondservant, 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" (Philippians 2:5-8).

## **JESUS HUMBLD HIMSELF BY BECOMING ONE OF US**

He had previously been equal with God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

He gave up that equality to become one of us. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

He did not grasp or cling to that equality with God. He humbled Himself to save us.

## **JESUS HUMBLD HIMSELF BY BECOMING A SERVANT**

He took upon Himself the "form of a servant". His spirit was opposite the selfish, destructive spirit seen in so many. He humbly served others.

Christ lived among men as one who served. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Do you live the servant life? "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). He humbled Himself to serve.

## **JESUS HUMBLD HIMSELF BY BEING HUMAN**

He became part of the human family with all its pains and sorrows. He became one of us. When He came to earth, He came "in the likeness of man." "Inasmuch, then, as the children

have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). Christ understands because He has been one of us. He humbled Himself to be one of us.

### **JESUS HUMBLD HIMSELF BY DYING**

He became obedient "to the point of death, even the death of the cross." God gave His Son as a sin offering, thus sins could both be punished and forgiven. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance, God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26). Only by the death of Jesus could man's sins be forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). Are you saved in Christ? He humbled Himself by dying.

Have you believed in Christ and been baptized into His death?

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). There is no fellowship with Christ before baptism into Christ. Salvation is possible because Christ humbled Himself and became our Savior. Thank God for Jesus!

## *How Soon After Repentance Can One Be Activated To Full Service?*

**JACK WILHELM**

The Bible has much to say about forgiveness, for which we can be thankful. God is a merciful God of the second chance. Christians are taught to imitate His compassion. It is important for those who forgive and those who are forgiven to comply with God's teaching. In the past, we may have heard more teaching

about the duties of forgivers than we have heard about the duties of the forgiven.

### **FRUITS WORTHY OF REPENTANCE**

John the baptizer told some to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). He knew that there should be some visible continuing verification in their behaviour of the penitence they professed. In effect, he said, "If you mean it when you say you have repented, show us."

### **JESUS AND MATTHEW 21:28-31**

Jesus told a story in Matthew 21:28-31 which shows that observable compliance to a commitment is preferred to mere lip service. He told of two sons, both of whom were asked by their father to work in his vineyard. One said he would do so, but did not honour the intention he confessed. The other said he would not but later changed his mind and went. It is clear that Jesus is disappointed in the behaviour of a person who pledges future obedience but does not show proof of it in his subsequent actions.

### **THE CASE OF THE CORINTHIANS**

The case of public sin in I Corinthians 5 that Paul rebuked and the subsequent developments provide a clear example also of what we are studying. Paul commanded the church to discipline one who was openly sinning. The church appeared to be condoning the sinner's involvement, shown by the "glorying" about it that Paul condemned (I Corinthians 10:32).

It is a recognized principle in the Bible that sin can be so public in the lives of some that they must be "rebuke(d) in the presence of all, that the rest all may fear" (I Timothy 5:20). It must be admitted also that it is possible for the church to be offended by the behaviour of people (I Corinthians 10:32). Even as Paul taught them firmly to discipline, he also taught them plainly that they needed to forgive the sinner when he repented. Read carefully II Corinthians 2:3-8, especially verse 7: "... you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one is swallowed up with too much sorrow."

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SINNER**

Is there not more implied here, however, than merely the

reaction and responsibility of the church? After all, the sinner had sinned and the ball was in his court to repent. Sometimes the sinner wants the church to be the heavy. He can exploit the situation by swaying public opinion. A church merely trying to do its duty is portrayed as being heartless and self-righteous, easing the need for any proof of penitence. Notice that Paul refers to the "much sorrow" that man apparently had shown (verse 7). That person's "sorrow" was so obvious that Paul wanted them to be cautious that they not go for overkill. In that case, the sinner was not trying to get by with token sorrow.

Further, he saw evidence of "earnest desire, your mourning, and zeal" (II Corinthians 7:7) and evidence of much godly sorrow that had caused genuine repentance (II Corinthians 7:7-9). Later, in verse 11, he affirmed that they had "sorrowed in a godly manner." He was impressed with the "diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

It was obvious that the penitence was not pretended. The Corinthians did not resist facing the issue or attempt to rationalize the guilty. They cleared the air and showed every indication that all doubt had been removed about the genuineness of the penitence and their response to it. The anxiety which Paul felt as he had awaited getting word about what they did shows that there was an expectation on his part that changed behaviour should be obviously demonstrated.

### **THE CASE OF JOHN MARK**

When John Mark defected (Acts 13:5,13), Paul apparently felt that some time was needed for Mark to regain a stature that justified using him as a public servant and traveling companion again (Acts 15:37-39). We do not have to prove that Mark was in jeopardy about his soul at that time to see that Paul thought Mark needed more time to regain Paul's confidence. It is true that Barnabas had confidence in Mark again quicker than Paul did (Acts 15:37-39). Kinfolks usually are more charitable, but they may also be less objective. Paul still wanted to wait a while longer about using Mark, but with the passing of more time, he did give a public endorsement of Mark (II Timothy 4:11).

In some local situations, it may well be wise for brethren

who have sinned publicly still not to push quickly for ministry in a public format until enough time has passed for the congregation in general to regain confidence. One who has offended the church and is genuine about repentance should be able to understand that even more keenly than those who have been offended. I know that the Lord used Peter on Pentecost less than two months after his public denial, but He also had been with Peter under circumstances that reaffirmed what He felt He could expect from him (John 21). Peter was also the possessor of divine air and guidance that we don't have.

### **DEACONS ALSO TO BE TESTED**

The concept of readiness, acceptance, and approval for public ministry is taught concerning deacons who should "first be tested" and "blameless" (I Timothy 3:10). It's not a matter of their salvation being questioned or their being "second class" Christians. It's a matter of gaining acceptance so the congregation can have confidence in them, acquired by the passing of time and observation of their past records of service.

### **EXTREME ACTIONS GENERATE TROUBLE**

You will notice that it's the extreme actions that usually get us in trouble. For example: Sometimes people in sin stubbornly refuse to repent, or if they repent, self-righteous people stubbornly refuse to forgive them. In between, there are those situations where some in both of those camps try to do the right thing. But, human nature is such that not everyone can turn their feelings on and off quickly. So, eyebrows are raised if the "penitent" are thrust too quickly into the forefront of public ministry. Even if it's technically the "right" thing to do to be magnanimous and to cheer for the underdog, acting as if nothing ever happened, isn't there some Biblical precedent in these cases that justifies our taking some time to let a fuller measure of confidence and trust be gained? How long? I don't know. Some people seem to be genuinely convincing more quickly than others. Even though all sins must be forgiven, some evidently are more public than others. John said there were sins "unto death" and "not unto death" (I John 5:16) which, taking the full context of I John into consideration, seemed to relate to whether the sins were stubbornly denied and defended or whether they

were freely confessed. There are times when one responds requesting prayer about personal thoughts and feelings of inadequacy and there are times when people have been involved in sins that attracted widespread news coverage. So, I'm reluctant to set a time frame since an entire congregation may be readily and quickly convinced of very sincere action that involve matters that have not been public in the first place. The Bible seems to recognize human differences. Paul said, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). So different humans have different response times as to what is possible and what depends on them. But if a large segments of a congregation is upset about hasty acceptance in cases of very public sin and offense to the church, what can it hurt to ease a situation by slowing things down a bit? Some have thought that I Timothy 5:22 ("do not lay hands on anyone hastily") was a word of caution that no one be appointed too quickly to a sacred ministry for which they were not ready.

### **THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

The nature of the church and statements about it seem to imply that caution can be wise, however, in those noteworthy cases where the entire church is seriously affected at least. After all, "in fact the body is not one member but many" (I Corinthians 12:14). Paul warned further that "there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (I Corinthians 12:25). Simply put, that may be saying, if members stumble, then love, rebuke, and reclaim them. If they repent, forgive them, but also work with them so that they can in the future be as fruitful and useful as ministering servants as possible. In the meantime, the ones who are repenting need to "have the same care" for the church as they want to receive. They need to recognize that a time of growth and rehabilitation may be wise. That will let human nature work in the minds of all at the same time so that no division (schism) would occur in the church, as might happen if there were a push for a level of public visibility that was premature.

Those who are forgiven and appreciate it most should be among the first to understand the process-and insist that it be followed. (Cf. Luke 7:41-47).

# ***Can You Recommend Your Religion?***

**ROD RUTHERFORD**

If one finds a product that is really good, he will enthusiastically recommend it to his friends, relatives, and neighbours. If one discovers a new restaurant which has excellent food and friendly service, he will be eager to tell others about it. Most folks like to recommend things to others that they have found helpful to them. There is a certain satisfaction one gets from guiding others to a good product or to a good place of business. But, what about religion? Can we recommend our religion to others?

One's religious faith should be the most important thing in his life! It should impact how he lives and determine how he treats his fellow man. It should give him purpose in life and hope in death. It should provide strength in trial and guidance for daily living. The way one lives will show his faith or lack of it. It will either recommend his religion to others, or else discourage them from wanting to have any part in it. What about you? Can you recommend your religion?

## **CAN YOU RECOMMEND THE SOURCE OF YOUR RELIGION?**

Does it come from man or from God? There are literally thousands of different religions in all the world. They teach many different and contradictory things. Can all of them be right? The Bible says that God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33). It also says: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

It is not enough just to be religious! In order to please God, one must be religiously RIGHT. The prophet Jeremiah wrote: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). In the New Testament, we read about a good man who was very religious. His name was Cornelius. He worshipped the true God, but he was not saved (Acts 10:1-2). It was necessary for him to learn the true way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and to obey it

(Acts 10:48; Mark 16:16; Acts 11:14). Unless one's religion comes from the Word of God, he cannot recommend it as a true religion.

### **CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION AS A GOOD RELIGION BY WHICH TO LIVE?**

Does it cause you to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12)? Does it cause you to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12)? Does it teach you to love God and your fellow man (Matthew 22:37-40)? Does it teach you to be kind and forgiving to others (Ephesians 4:32)? Does it teach you to "esteem others better than yourself" (Philippians 2:3)? In short, are you a better person because of your religion? Is the world as better place in which to live because of your influence (Matthew 5:13-16)?

### **CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION AS A GOOD RELIGION BY WHICH TO DIE?**

The Bible says: "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). The Bible also teaches that life is short at best and uncertain at worst: "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Can you face the grave with courage and in hope of the life which is to come (John 14:1-3; Revelation 14:13)? If you cannot, then your religion has failed you.

Why not decide today to follow the religion of Jesus Christ? He is the One Who died for your sins (1 Peter 2:24). He alone is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24). Repent of all your sins (Luke 13:3). Confess Christ before men (Matthew 10:32-33). Be buried with Christ in baptism so that your sins will be washed away (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38; 22:16). The Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:42, 47). You, then, can live, love, and serve Him in His church all the days of your life and die with a sure hope of a home in heaven in your heart (Revelation 2:10).

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