

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

Vol. 32

September 2001

No. 5

## EDITORIAL

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

***“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”***

Two specific things are taught in the Scripture mentioned above from Philippians 3:20. One, the citizenship of a Christian is in heaven, and second, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ will come back from heaven.

How does one become a citizen of a country? One is either born in a country or migrate to a country by fulfilling legal requirements of that particular country. How does one become a citizen of heaven, according to the Bible? And remember, there are only two places of permanent citizenship in eternity, after this life of earth is over, either heaven or hell. What did Christ teach? He said: “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3&5). How does that take place? When one hears the gospel of Christ and personally believes in Him, and confesses Him to be the Son of God, and repents of all wrong and then goes down into the body or grave of water to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and comes out of it to walk in the newness of life by emulating Christ in daily

living. This is the only way of having the assurance that one truly is a citizen of heaven, because this is what the Bible teaches. Where? Read from: Mark 16: 15,16; Acts 2:37-47; 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-6. Any one can do this, and thus become a citizen of heaven, according to God's promise. And those who belong to heaven look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to take them with him, as He had promised, to heaven, to live with Him for evermore. (John 14:1-3).

As is already observed, Christ is coming back to receive and take with Him, His fellow-citizens of heaven, to heaven. He is not coming back on this earth, even for one day, because, at His coming, the Bible teaches, this earth and sky will be burned up, since there will be no one left to live on earth anymore. (2 Peter 3:8-10). At His coming, in the clouds, as He went up in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11), all the citizens of heaven will be lifted up into air to meet with Him in the clouds, from where they will go with Him to enter heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). At His appearance up in the air, in a moment, all the dead, both righteous and unrighteous will be resurrected by His power, to receive their rewards, either the eternal life of heaven or the everlasting condemnation of hell. (John 5:28,29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:46). All who would have ever lived on earth will be resurrected and all will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-53; Philippians 3:21; Matthew 10:28). Speaking of that great and glorious day of the Lord, Peter concluded by saying, "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 His promise, look for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:11-13). To make us worthy of heaven God has done His part, likewise, we too need to make sure that we become citizens of heaven by doing those things He has required of us.

# “Save Yourselves”

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible teaches that we are sinners (Romans 3:23) and, as such, we need a saviour (Luke 19:10). After Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, when the Apostles had gathered in Jerusalem, they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from God—the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The accompanying sound, as of a rushing mighty wind, caused a great throng of people to gather, to see what was happening.

Peter, with the other Apostles, began to preach to the crowd, telling them of the Lord's coming into the world, of the miracles He performed to convince people that He was truly the Son of God, and of how He had been crucified for the sins of the world. They spoke boldly of His resurrection, and declared that He had returned to the Father in heaven, to reign as the king they had been expecting.

Many of those who heard that sermon were cut to the heart, becoming believers, and they wanted to know what they must do to be saved. *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). The record goes on to show that *“with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:40,41).

Please notice in Acts 2:40 that Peter said that they should save themselves! Can one person—or a whole multitude of people—save themselves? The answer is obvious: No, we cannot save ourselves! We can't save ourselves with money. There is not enough money in the world to save us. We can't save ourselves by living a good moral life, having a good conscience, or by any other standard we might add to these. We can't even save ourselves by piling up a mountain of good works! Why? Because there is no way that we can earn or merit salvation.

That is not to say that we can be saved, either, without

obeying the Lord and doing the good works He teaches us to do. But even after we have obeyed in all that He asks, being born into His family and living for Him, being faithful to Him until we die, still if we are saved eternally it will be by the grace of Almighty God (Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation is His gift of grace and mercy, held out freely to all men. In order to receive it, we need only to submit to His will in penitence and obedience.

But the majority in the religious world—even those who believe in Christ—evidently think that they can save themselves! They have devised all kinds of ways to be saved. One will tell you that if you want to be saved you must do this, or that, and another will tell you something else. Most would say, on the one hand, that it is necessary *only to accept Jesus as one's personal saviour* to be saved; but on the other hand, if a *good moral person dies without ever "accepting Christ"* the thinking is, "He was such a good person—you know he is saved." So such people are reasoning that one's own goodness is enough to save a person from condemnation, even if he has never been "born again." In those cases, they have accounted the cleansing blood of Christ as totally unnecessary for salvation!

Of course, those who do not believe in Christ have devised their own ways to be saved: through inflicting pain and suffering on their bodies, through their own ideas of "good works," through "rebirth," through saying prayers and chanting words, through offering sacrifices—the list of works and ways to obtain salvation seems endless!

How can anyone who knows anything about the teachings of the Bible accept such far-out ideas?

But let's go back to Peter's statement in Acts 2:40, when he exhorted the people to save themselves. While we cannot save ourselves *by our own efforts and goodness*, without Christ, we *can save ourselves by accepting the salvation* Jesus offers. That is, by believing in Him, repenting of our sins as He has asked us to do, by being buried into His death in the waters of baptism for the remission of our sins, as pointed out in Acts 2:38, we can save ourselves through our response to Christ.

On that day, when Peter told the people to save themselves, those who gladly received his word were baptized and were added to the church—the body of saved people—by God, Himself, according to Acts 2:47. So, who was baptized?

The penitent believers. And who was saved? Those who were baptized. And who was added to the church? Those who responded to Peter's admonition to "save themselves"! And who saved them and added them to the church? The Lord!

Now, in the sense of their ready response to Peter's command, those people saved themselves. But they did not save themselves, separate and apart from the Lord. It was through His gracious invitation, coupled with their penitent obedience, that those people were saved. If they had not responded with glad hearts to the gospel, they would have died lost, no matter how good they might have been or how many good works they might have done. Just as it was necessary for Christ to die to atone for the sins of mankind, it is also necessary for each one of us to be washed in His blood in order to experience the cleansing power of His blood.

The point in all of this is that you can hear the gospel, the good news of salvation, and you can come to understand in your heart what the Lord would require of you in order that you might be saved, but *if you hear only, or believe only*, you cannot and will not be saved. To be saved, you must not only hear the Gospel and its commands, but you must believe it and obey it. Christ will not *force you to accept salvation*; He will not force you to believe in Him and to follow Him. If you choose to be lost, that is your choice. But if you want to be saved you must accept salvation on Christ's terms: To have forgiveness of your sins and to become a part of the Lord's family, you must be born into that family through faith and baptism. In order to remain saved throughout life and to live with God eternally after this life is over, you must remain faithful to Him until death (Revelation 2:10). Again, He said, "*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*" (Revelation 22:14).

I ask again, "Can one save himself?" The answer is both Yes and No! Yes, by believing in the Lord and obeying His will, No, one cannot save himself without the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Search for Truth Principles at Work**

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

Jeremy's mother, Sandra, declared she had no time for 'church'. Being the only wage-earner, and with no husband to depend on for any help, she worked over-time as much as she could. Jeremy had practically raised himself from the time of the divorce when he was seven. He would come home from school and eat what he could find, watch TV, or play—or fight—in the street with other boys in the neighborhood who were also on their own in the afternoons. From an early age they had formed themselves into a small gang of ruffians, getting into more trouble than they could fight their way out of. Sandra was always fearful of phone calls at night, expecting a report of some trouble Jeremy was in with neighbors or with the police.

Usually on the way home from work, Sandra would pick up something quick for the evening meal and then would do washing or other house work until time for bed. She worked also on Saturday whenever she could. Sunday was reserved for sleeping late and doing the marketing and other necessary work in the house. "Where's the time for anything else?" She demanded when Jeremy asked if she would attend the Sunday worship with him and Timothy's family. So Jeremy went alone.

"I met Jeremy's mother today," Andrew told Rachel one night when he came home from work. "Actually, she's in an office just down the hall from mine. I hadn't realized that that was who she is. She's terribly short-tempered, and not very well liked because of that."

"Maybe you can befriend her and can help with some of her problems," encouraged Rachel. "I have to feel sympathy for anyone who couldn't stay home and rear her own children. These years of loving and guiding Timothy and Titus have been precious to me. What a loss it would have been if I'd been just

struggling every day to manage somehow to pay the bills, and facing all the problems alone."

"Yes," agreed Andrew, "I'm very thankful that you were willing to budget closely and to do without some fine but totally unnecessary things, so that you could stay at home with our boys. At least, in our case we had a choice. Sadly, in Sandra's there wasn't any choice at all."

The next day Andrew introduced himself to Sandra, explaining that he was Timothy's father, Jeremy's friend. "Oh yes," Sandra acknowledged, "Jeremy's told me about you. He asked me to come along on Sundays, but you can see I don't have the time. I have to admit, though, that he's easier to manage since he's made friends with your son. I told him his wild friends were no good for him, but he never listens to me. He's brat—that boy! Too much like his father!"

"I don't know about that," answered Andrew, "but he's an intelligent boy. He and Timothy study together, and the competition's good for both of them. In fact, Jeremy says he's learned a useful Bible verse, too, in Proverbs 15:1: *'A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.'*"

"So that's what he means when he keeps reminding me, 'A soft answer, Mom! A soft answer!' I didn't know where he'd gotten that. I'm always so tired, it's hard for me to be patient with anybody."

A few days later Sandra came into Andrew's office. To his surprise she was carrying a small Bible, and was laughing. "Jeremy said his teacher in Bible class has been studying Proverbs with them, and he showed some verses to me! I never knew there was such a sense of humor in the Bible! this one was good for both of us: *'A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continuous dripping.'* Then I was reading a little more before going to bed, and I found this one: *'It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.'* So I told Jeremy he'd better just go sit on the corner of the housetop, because I've been 'contentious' too long to change now!"

"No—it's never too late to change any habit, if a person really wants to change," assured Andrew. "And the changes that are guided by God's word will make life better in every way."

"I'm beginning to see, just from these humorous verses Jeremy showed me, that there is practical use for these things in daily life. I thought the Bible was only for religious guidance."

"No," answered Andrew, again. "Like a loving father, God has written the instructions in the Bible to help His children live the happiest, fullest, richest life possible in this world, as well as to prepare for the eternal life to come. Sure, there's sin and wrong all around us, but when we listen to God and obey Him, we escape so much that's bad even in this physical life."

"But how can the Bible make a real difference to me, with all of my problems?" asked Sandra.

"Even here at work, it will change things. As you practice giving a soft answer, with a smile, gradually that will change your relationship with others in the office. They'll like you better, that'll make you happier, and when you're happier you'll do better work. Better work, a soft answer, and a smile will get you promotions and that will help your financial situation. And when there's less money pressure and more happiness, things will ease up at home. You'll be happier there, you and Jeremy will begin to enjoy being together and doing things together. That will bring more occasions for talking about the things in your heart, and those talks will create a deeper understanding and love between you. Gradually, your whole life will be changed."

"It sounds so simple," Sandra said wistfully. "I wish it could be as easy as that."

"I didn't say 'easy,'" Andrew corrected, "but it is *possible*, and it's the only way for you to have happiness, even in this life. Just think about the way you and Jeremy were going, Sandra. He would soon have been in a serious gang, probably on drugs, and giving both of you endless heartaches. Such troubles at home would have permeated you hours away from home, too, so that your job would have been affected. But God's word can lead you away from all of those problems and can make life something worth living. Why don't you try it, for Jeremy's sake, as well as your own?"

"O.K. I'll try," Sandra conceded. "I won't be able to sleep late on Sundays anymore, but it'll be worth it! I have a lot to learn, and a lot of 'mothering' to make up to Jeremy. I hope you and your family will help us..."



"Of course we will," Andrew assured her with victorious joy in his heart. "That's what we love doing best! I'm here to answer Bible questions and offer advice every work day, as well as being always as close as the phone. My wife, Rachel, will be able to help, too, any time you need her. And I can't wait to tell Timothy that you'll be coming with Jeremy for Bible classes and worship on Sundays!"

## ***The Last Words***

**FRANCIS DAVID**

Perhaps you might have seen some people on their sick beds. Sometimes, we see people those who have cancer or some serious sickness, and they are counting days to die and as the times comes nearer, they have many things to say to their loved ones and friends. A number of times, we see the words which were uttered by them as their time is nearing, have much important for us because those were their last words before death. Some of the things they say are very precious for us and its very hard to forget those things. I remember, when my sister in law, Jasmine David, wife of Brother Sunny David was in the hospital for about three months and in this period she talked to us many things and she even wrote some things on the pieces of paper and I tell you we still treasure her words and those pieces of paper. Sad to say inspite of best treatment and medication the doctors were not able to save her and she died on March 24 this year, but we still remember her last words.

When our Lord was about to be crucified, he lived among people and talked to them and told them many things. The word of God tells us that before His death He had a supper with His disciples. He must have had supper with them a number of times but this supper was a special one. In the book of Matthew we read the account of this special supper. Two elements were used in this supper which consist of bread and fruit of the vine. The bread was unleaven and fruit was fresh grape juice. We read and it says: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed

it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take this, eat, this is my body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:26-29). This institution of supper by Jesus before His death has much meaning for all the Christians all over the world. The churches of Christ wherever they are on Sunday gather together to remember His death. The death of Jesus Christ was very precious for Christians. When early christians came together to worship they will always remember His death. (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29). We do not remember His death quarterly or bi-monthly or on some special occasions but every first day of the week and that is Sunday.

When Jesus our Lord was in Garden of Gethsemane before his death, there also He uttered some words and these words are precious. Here in this garden He was very sorrowful and deeply distressed. He came to His disciples and said: "My Soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death. Stay here and watch with me." And then He prayed and said: "O My Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, as you will. And again second time He prayed and said: "O My Father if this cup cannot pass away from Me, unless I drink it, your will be done." We really treasure these words of Jesus when He prayed and said "Not My but thy will be done." When we pray how many times we say, Lord not ours but your will be done? We must depend on God and in every thing we must say that His will be done. Let us not force our will or desire on God.

Another important thing that we see when Jesus was on earth. He made a promise to His disciples. He told them that they should not be worried or troubled because He is going back to His Father. He said: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you." And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." We really treasure these words of Jesus. We must remember that when we live faithfully our lives on this earth

we will dwell with Jesus in heaven, because He has promised so. If you are a faithful Christian, then be assured, you have a place reserved for you in heaven.

Before His death on the cross, He also prayed for all believers to be united. This prayer of Jesus was for the unity of His people. Do we really treasure His last words for unity? The churches of Christ all over the world really treasured these words of Jesus which He said about unity. He prayed like this: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word: 'that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us that the world may believe that you sent Me.'" There are thousands of people in the world those who call themselves Christians don't care about these last words of Jesus which He said before His death. He prayed and His wish was that all His followers should be one in unity. But what we see today that there is so much disunity among the believers of Christ. There are hundreds of denominations today existing all over the world. They are known by different names and practices, the things which are contrary to the word of God. We must honor the last words of Jesus regarding Unity among His followers.

There are many other things that Jesus uttered before His death but one of the most remarkable words which were spoken by Him when he was about to die on that cruel cross were these: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." (Lk. 23:34). Can you imagine, a person who is beaten and mocked by the crowd, is praying for them that they should be forgiven? This shows us that what kind of mind and attitude our Lord had. Writing to Christians apostle Paul says: "let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ." Do we possess the spirit of forgiveness? Have you forgiven anyone who has wronged you? The Bible tells us through apostle Paul: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you. Let us treasure the words of Jesus which He spoke before His death and these things will help us to grow as Christians.

# **Can A Person Be Wrong In Spiritual Matters?**

**J.K. GOSSETT**

Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). In another place the Lord said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Again, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (See Matthew 15:1-20). The Sadducees said there was no resurrection. Jesus said to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:20). **THE SADDUCEES WERE WRONG!**

Saul of Tarsus was a man of great conviction and zeal. He persecuted the church, believing that he was doing the right thing. He sincerely thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Saul was a crusader against the gospel and those who embraced it. Before his conversion Saul was a persecutor, injurious and a blasphemer. His goal was to destroy the faith. **SAUL WAS WRONG!**

False teachers and their disciples are always wrong and cannot be right. There were teachers in the days of the apostles who denied the resurrection, scoffed at the second coming of Christ, advocated the extension of the Law of Moses beyond the cross, taught that grace was license to sin, denied that God was manifest in the flesh and taught that the second coming of Christ was imminent. These doctrines were false and **THE TEACHERS WHO ADVANCED THEM WERE WRONG!**

Not only can a person be wrong in spiritual matters, he can also be right. Not only can he be right, he must be right in order to please God. Error, all error, some error, old error, new error, big error, little error, any error is impotent. It is powerless, and therefore, cannot save.

Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

# *Let The Bible Answer*

ROBERT MEREDITH

What is an Apostle? The word Apostle means one sent. Jesus is called "*the Apostle and High Priest of our profession*" (Heb. 3:1) because He was sent by God. Barnabas, Paul's traveling companion, was called an Apostle (Acts 14:14) because he was sent by the church on Paul's first missionary trip. So the word Apostle is used to denote one who is sent. Most of the time the word Apostle applies to the twelve men who were chosen by Jesus for a special work.

Jesus, while He was on earth, chose twelve men and gave unto them delegated authority (Mt. 10:1-4; Lk. 6:13-16). Jesus promised the apostles that the power of the Holy Spirit would come upon them and would guide them in what they taught (Mt. 10:18-20; John 14:26; John 16:13). Jesus told the apostles, "*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Mt. 18:18). Jesus could say this because He knew that the Holy Spirit would be directing these men in what they taught. Jesus also told them, "*Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Mt. 19:28). The Apostles are judging spiritual Israel today because the church is guided by their teaching. Luke, in speaking of the first century church at Jerusalem, said, "*They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42). The church of today, as the first century church did, must follow what Christ and His Apostles taught. The apostles were ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador is an official representative of a nation. The apostles had delegated authority from Christ and when one obeyed the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), he was following the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

It was necessary after the establishment of the church (Acts 2) for God's revelation to be revealed and confirmed (Heb. 2:1-4). God revealed His will by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and confirmed it by miracles. The first century church had special gifts from the Holy Spirit to accomplish this, and these gifts were only passed by the laying on of the Apostles' hands (Acts 8:17-

18). God foretold in His Word that after His will had been revealed and confirmed that these miraculous gifts would also cease (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:11-13).

In Psalm 69:25 and 109:8, the Psalmist foretold of Judas and how his apostleship would be taken from him and given to another. Acts 1:15-26 tells of its fulfillment and how God chose Matthias to take the office of apostle in Judas' stead. Judas was the only one to lose this office, and all the other apostles are still ruling the church through their New Testament teachings. Today there is no continuous line of apostles because they have not lost their apostleship.

God's completed will was given through the apostles and the other inspired men of the first century (Mt. 10:18-20; 1 Cor. 2:9-13). Today, one needs to turn to God's Word and follow only it (Eph. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is the revealed mind of God (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

## *The Meaning of Life*

**ROD RUTHERFORD**

Long ago, King David asked God, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him" (Psalm 8:4)? People have many things in common with animals. They breathe the same air. They eat similar food. They have many of the same needs. But, people are different from animals.

Because we are different from animals, we want to know why we are here. What is our purpose on this earth? Since we know that we only live a few short years, how should we use our time? Should we live only to satisfy the needs of our bodies? Should we spend our time looking for the pleasures of this world?

Because we are different from animals, we want to know where we are going when we die. Life on earth is very short. Job said: "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue" (Job 14:12). Are we the

same as animals when we die? Do we just breathe our last breath and then there is nothing?

How can we find the answers to these questions? The only One who can give the answers is God Who created us. The answers are found in His Book, the Bible. In the Bible, God has told us who we are, why we are here on earth, and where we will go when we die.

## WHAT IS MAN?

What is man? What makes him different from the animals? The Apostle Paul answered this question when he wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica:

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23). Animals have physical bodies only. But, every person has a spirit within his body. Our bodies will die, decay, and return to the dust as did the first man Adam (Genesis 3:19; 35:18; James 2:26). But, the spiritual part of man will continue to live. The Bible says: "Then the dust (our bodies) will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the thinking, conscious, eternal soul which lives within the body) will return to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

## WHY ARE WE HERE?

Life on earth is very short. Death will soon come to each of us. Therefore, we are not wise if we live only to satisfy the needs of our bodies. We are also very foolish if we live only for the pleasures of this world. The Apostle John warned: "Do not love the world or the things in 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 is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (I John 2:15-17). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, asked: "What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26)? Our purpose on this earth is to bring glory to God by doing all He has told us to do in the Bible. The wise man wrote:

"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

### **WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

Where will our spirits go when we die? What happens when we leave this earth? After we die, we will go to be judged by God. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Each person will be judged for his own life (Romans 14:12). Each will be judged according to the way he has lived on earth (II Corinthians 5:10).

After the Judgment, there are only two possible places to go. One place is for those who have lived for God and served His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a place of peace, happiness, and rest. It is called "Heaven" (John 14:1-3; II Corinthians 4:16—5:6; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 21:27). The other place is for those who refuse to obey God, reject Jesus Christ, and spend their lives in the pleasures of this world. It is called "Hell," "the second death" and the "lake of fire" (Matthew 10:28; 25:46; II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

### **I MUST CHOOSE**

God loves us and wants us to be saved. He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a sacrifice for our sins so that we can be saved (John 3:16). But, God does not force us to be saved. He wants us to choose for ourselves. Jesus invites us to come to Him: "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29). In order to come to Jesus, we must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 8:24); we must repent of all our past sins (Luke 13:3); we must confess our faith in Christ before men (Romans 10:9,10; Acts 8:37); and we must be buried in water in baptism and raised up out of the water to live as a new person (Romans 6:3-5; Acts 2:38; II Corinthians 5:17).



# *From Acorns To Oaks*

BYRON LAIRD

When the Book of the Law was lost, God's ancient people went astray. When it was found, it was used by honest and earnest men to lead Israel back to God's way (II Kings 22:8-23;28). Thus, the kingdom was in the Law.

Likewise, by putting the power of reproduction in the Gospel, the Word (which is the seed of Christ's kingdom), God had made possible a faithful kingdom (or church) in any place, any time. It is not necessary to have some organic connection between present congregations, and leaders of the past to assure fidelity.

Churches of Christ today strive to restore the New Testament church, not to build a bigger and better denomination. As an original work of art can be restored by carefully following certain principles, so can the church. The concept of restoration is not only logical, but Biblical also. Founded during the first century by Jesus Christ, His church still exists on earth today. We recall Christ's promise, "upon this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Death could not prevent His completing His purpose, for "the Lord is not slack concerning His promises" (II Peter 3:9). We believe this happened.

However, Jesus died about 50 days prior to the birth of His church in Jerusalem, so He implemented His plan through His apostles on that Pentecost day following His resurrection. We know that Peter and the other apostles could only lay the foundation, Christ (I Corinthians 3:11).

Peter did so by preaching Christ: His death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:22-36). At the end of his sermon, about 3,000 souls responded for baptism, thus constituting the first church of Christ on earth (Acts 2:38-47). It is certain that following Christ's plan made them disciples of Christ, not of Peter, the man who presented the plan.

Do we not have an example of a restoration of the church not long after its establishment in Jerusalem? Here is how it happened. Shortly after being established, the Jerusalem church

was scattered abroad. It appears that the only disciples remaining in Jerusalem were the apostles, for it is written of the church that "they were all scattered abroad except the apostles" (Acts 8:1-4). Taken literally, this passage indicates that the church was right back where it started from on that early Pentecost morning.

Central to the concept of restoration is the Biblical idea that the "word of the kingdom is the seed" (Luke 8:11). The kingdom (which is the church), is in the Word, just as the oak is in the acorn. In the acorn, there are the essential features of the plant it came from such as species, variety, colour, bark, leaves, fruit. Therefore, as long as the healthy acorn remains the kingdom of oaks has not been destroyed. Likewise, as long as the Bible stands, the kingdom of Christ, with its salient features, has not been destroyed. This is why Jesus said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Daniel averred "it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44), and the writer of Hebrews assures us it "cannot be moved" (Hebrews 12:28-29).

A great apostasy, or falling away, was predicted by Paul in Acts 20:28-32; II Timothy 3:1-5; I Timothy 4:1-4; II Thessalonians 2, II Timothy 4:1-4, among other passages. It happened. But, it is unnecessary to trace that faithful church in a visible, unbroken line of succession, throughout history. The congregations were, and still are, autonomous. The power of reproduction is in the Gospel. There were groups in history who did not follow Rome and subscribed to many of the principles characteristic of the first century church, seeking to be the New Testament church. They were opposed by the clergy, who, in effect, had "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men" by chaining the Bible to the pulpits, but when the Bible was placed in the hands of the people so they could read for themselves, movements got under way on the continent of Europe toward restoration of New Testament Christianity.

John Wycliff, William Tyndale, Martin Luther and others, at great cost to themselves, began this work. As the Bible (the seed) was made available for planting, the fruit appeared first in the form of Reformation. Unfortunately, a number of practices for which there is no Bible authority were accepted by the reformers. Figures like Martin Luthèr, John Calvin, and others contributed much, but their efforts were weakened in that adherents crystallized their teachings into creeds, and formed new

denominations unlike the New Testament church.

Step by step, the process of reformation continued as men who loved truth in America continued the search for the pure seed of the Gospel.

A number of men were, each, preaching the same message. This preaching became a great movement. Their slogan was, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, let us be silent; let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways; in matters of faith, let us have unity, in matters of opinion, let us have liberty, and in all things, let us have charity!" This movement had great appeal. It still does, for by teaching and practicing the original divine principles set forth in the new Testament, we can, indeed, restore the New Testament church at any place and time. We ask your help. We believe that we understand the Gospel as it was intended. "Come now, let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).

## ***The Place Of Reason***

**STANFAST OYINNA Snr**

The ability to reason is one of the most powerful abilities with which God has blessed man. God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), for it was only in this way that God could fellowship with men. God could show men His purpose and men could respond to the words of the most Holy God.

As it is written, "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). This declaration is exhilarating to the spirit of the redeemed of the earth. God is presently preparing the future inhabitants of "that world" (Luke 20:35) for rule and dominion there.

God is a God of purpose. He has never done anything that has not had far-reaching implications and results. Christ is, at this present time, implementing the precious salvation that He purchased. Soon, God will be justified in all His workings. God will be proven to be true in every instance and conclusion. And, men will come before the judgment bar of God and give an account of the deeds which have been done in the body.

God illuminates. He has provided a way that man might be saved. God has always loved man and has always wanted "His off-spring" (Acts 17:28) to come to repentance. Remember that Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This redemption is not a quick fix to avenge an attack waged by Satan that resulted in this blighted condition of man. God foreknew that man would fall and from the very start of this enterprise, He planned the way back to Himself.

This man that God created is wonderfully created indeed (Psalm 139:14). Just look at one capability of this creation: man has the ability to choose, to reason, to respond. God truly has made man in His own image. We are God's creation and are given the right to freely choose.

God created man in His image because God wanted man for himself. But, God wanted man to choose for himself. God foreknew all the implications of creating man free and yet, God continued with His plan. It was a good plan.

Men can reason with their God. They can come to God if they will only humble themselves, repent, believe, and obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember our God in the days of our youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Let us use our minds and reason to the glory of God. Let us render unto Him our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1-2).

## *The Kind Of People We Ought To Be*

**ROGER JOHNSON**

Jesus is coming again! The fact of His coming should serve as a present incentive to holiness of life and wholeheartedness in service. It was in the context of a discussion of the second coming of Jesus that the apostle Peter urged, "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness" (II Peter 3:11). In this chapter, Peter lists several characteristics or marks of the Christian in whose life the truth of Christ's return is a practical hope.

## **1. HE SEEKS TO LIVE A CHRIST-LIKE LIFE**

What would be your immediate reaction if you learned that Jesus was coming within the next two hours? Most would need every bit of those two hours to prepare for His coming. Apologies would have to be made which, for one reason or another, have not been made (Matthew 5:23-24). Certain books would be destroyed; loved ones whom we have failed to teach or warn would be contacted; confessions of wrong would be made. The fact is, Jesus is coming—and He may come today. The practical effect of this truth should be an incentive to holy living (II Peter 3:14).

## **2. HE MANIFESTS MORE INTEREST IN THE WORLD TO COME THAN IN THIS WORLD**

"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). This is not to say that we make no positive contribution to the society in which we live on earth, but we realize that this world is not our home. We are only pilgrims passing through and traveling on to heaven (Philippians 3:20). At Jesus' second coming, this present world will be dissolved (II Peter 3:10) and there will be the realization of that heavenly home prepared by Christ (John 14:1-3).

## **3. HE IS CONCERNED FOR THE LOST**

Peter spoke of the great compassion Jesus had for the perishing (II Peter 3:9,15). We should share in His deep concern. In anticipation of the Lord's second coming, every opportunity of spreading the gospel should be utilized.

The fact of Christ's second coming should exert a deep influence on us in inducing us to lead holy lives. Nothing on earth is permanent. It is all transitory. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved," what manner of person have you been?

# ***Who Is Right?***

**VERNON C. JONES**

It may be difficult for us to see things as God wants them to

be because we are so busy seeing things as we believe they ought to be. It may be more difficult for us to see the New Testament picture of the Lord's church in the first century because we are so accustomed to churches in the twentieth century.

Six thousand years of human history bear out the truth that in religion God's ways always works and man's ways always fail. The only sensible path to pursue is the path that God has laid out for us. The passing of time adds to the maintain of human ways, ideas, philosophies, creeds, manuals and churches, but it cannot improve God's Word. Nineteen centuries ago, Jesus built His church, and the apostles revealed His will by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Man can improve upon neither, but the need of the hour is that we accept and learn to be content with both. The New Testament is still intact; the Lord's church is yet the same as when built.

For various reasons, men have written creeds and established churches. We are not so much concerned about their motives as we are about the outcome of their labours. Honest souls are divided in religion and do not believe there is any specific answer to the problem of division in religion. Some will ask, "Who is right?", then they will decide that no one is entitled to the claim, therefore, all are right. But, think, God's Word is right, and they only can be right who conform to and defend that Word (Psalm 19:7-8; 33:4; II Peter 2:15).

In faithful churches of Christ today, we offer absolutely nothing but the Word of God and an effort to conform to God's pattern set forth in the Scriptures. We know that whatsoever is not authorized by the Bible rightly divided, whether human creeds, ideas, ways, practices or names, will result in the departure and division. We do not plead for "our way" over "your way" but for God's way over men's ways. The all important question for time and eternity is, "Are you conforming to God's way?" Such produces unity and the Lord's church, not divisions and denominations. (Isaiah 55:7-9; Luke 1:6; I Corinthians 1:10).

# *Courage*

**SANDRA F. COBBLE**

This is not the final word on courage, although it may be my final word that you will see published, for my medical prognosis is not what the doctor calls encouraging. Courage is not a veiled death wish as seen in the lifestyles that defy all reasonable expectations. Courage is not the instantaneous acts that most persons think of as heroic. Though many such acts are to be lauded, there is seldom much thought given to consequences of one's actions. Do not the Scriptures teach that we are to exercise wisdom, good judgment, and prudence? Courage analyses all known factors then decides upon a course of action based on that analysis. Yes, one may be fearful of the unknown. He may even be more fearful of known potentials. But courage acts even though harm may be to one's self. When David is talking about the person who will abide in God's presence, he says in Psalm 15:1-4, "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Note that even when a person swore to his own hurt and yet had the courage to keep his oath, David pronounced him blessed.

Courage is preparing to live in such a way as to glorify God despite having been pronounced as terminally ill. We are born terminally ill. "For it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). As we begin to mature and become aware of death we may begin to make some type of arrangements for expiration, even though the idea of our own death seems unreal. We buy insurance. We make wills. And the more mature among us begin thinking about making peace with God, with our neighbour, and with ourselves. But then comes the announcement, "Your form of cancer has no known cure." "The symptoms can be treated to some extent with radiation and

chemotherapy. But you are dying. You should make arrangements to enter a nursing home so someone can care for you." Generally persons tend to react in one of two ways. Many do not accept what their doctors have told them. They search every where for that elusive cure. Others simply give up. They take to their beds and lie there bemoaning their fate and waiting for death. Some may begin to enjoy the extra attention they are getting. They act in such a way as to evoke the sympathy of others. But there is a better alternative, one that will glorify God. Even a smile can do wonders for another, so can a simple 'please' or 'thank you'. Taking time to just listen to another's problems of the day can ease his burdens. These simple things glorify God. And a person who is terminally ill can feel freer to ask, "How about a hug?" Both persons will feel better and will glorify God. And when a person comes to cheer up one who is terminally ill and leaves feeling better than when he came, then God had been glorified. True courage does not ignore obstacles. True courage recognizes obstacles but goes on to glorify God despite all obstacles. Mark Twain put it this way, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear." William Cullen Bryant said, "So live, that when thy summons comes to join the innumerable caravan which moves to that mysterious realm, where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death, thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night, scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave, like one that wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

However, Paul's inspired statement gives more comfort and encouragement than any and all the writings of ordinary men, and he said in Philippians 1:23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Those of us who have put our trust in the Lord and accepted His grace through an obedient faith can accept the statement of Paul at face value, and face the future with courage.

