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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

Suppose, someone is taking certain medicine for a long time for an ailment, prescribed by a quack. But suddenly he learns from a Medical Specialist that he was taking a wrong medicine and that it was actually giving him serious side effect, and if he didn't quit taking it immediately, he would soon die of a dangerous disease. That person, if he would be in his right mind, wouldn't continue with that medicine any longer.

Christ was speaking to the Pharisees and scribes of the Jews, when He said to them, quoting from the prophet Isaiah, at Matthew 15:8 & 9, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” No doubt, those people, Christ said, were worshipping God, as they believed that they were doing, may be with all sincerity, but in fact, they were worshipping in vain, because they were worshipping God according to the traditions and commandments of men. What a plight!

As humans we are all susceptible to fall for something that may seem genuine, but in fact is not. This is true physically, and

this is also true religiously. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12). When it comes to physical things, there are ways, standards and means by which we can know the authenticity of things. Yet, there are all kinds of false, spurious, and counterfeit things available, and even genuine and sincere people obtain them by paying their hard earned money. Sometimes people check, but sometimes they get duped. However, when it comes to spiritual matters, we can know for sure if certain belief or practice is wrong or right, by comparing it from the Bible.

How did Christ know about those people that they were worshipping God in vain? Because He knew that they were not worshipping Him in the way God had asked them to do in the Old Testament Law of Moses, under which they were living at that time. In the same way we too can know today, if as Christians we are worshipping God according to His will or not by comparing our worship of God as He has revealed in His New Testament. And, if our worship of God today is not according to the specified way of God in the New Testament, then, no matter, how sincerely our worship is rendered, it stands vain in the sight of God, as is also exemplified in the Old Testament book of Leviticus chapter 10:1 & 2.

What then, the New Testament of the Bible says about the acceptable worship today? First of all, when the church of Christ was established in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, those who were baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and were thus added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47), in verse 42 it says of them that, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 20:7 says, "Now on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul, the apostle, told the church at Corinth: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." In Ephesians 5:19 we read, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Christ taught, at John 4:24: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Said Paul, again,

at 1 Corinthians 14:15: "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." Therefore, when God's people gather together today to worship Him on the first day of the week or Sunday, they should worship Him in spirit and in truth with understanding. Again, God's word is truth. (John 17:17). We must therefore, take part in the Lord's Supper, in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Give our collection as God has prospered us. Study from God's word. We do not have an apostle with us today, such as the apostle Paul, but we do have their inspired writings in the New Testament to study from. Not our testimonies, but God's word must be preached (2 Timothy 4:2). Must pray with spirit and understanding and must sing with spirit and understanding. We must not add into God's instructions and neither should we try to take away anything from God's commandments. God's way is the only right way.

How Do We Deal With Our Enemies?

J.C. CHOATE

All people have enemies. Even though Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, He had enemies. The end result was that He was finally crucified on the cross. Not only did He have enemies, but they were *religious* enemies—men who hated Him because *He was righteous* and because *He taught that all must be righteous in order to be acceptable to God*. The Romans crucified Him, but His religious enemies were the ones actually responsible for His death.

We also have enemies. We who have obeyed the gospel and are members of the Lord's family are surrounded by people who oppose us. We are trying to live the Christian life so we can go to heaven but still there are those who resent us, find fault with us, and work against us. The world surrounds us with all of its temptations, trying to lead us away from the Lord. Religious bodies and religious leaders oppose Christ and oppose us

because we follow Him. And, always there is Satan, our arch enemy, with his host of followers, working to destroy us.

So how do we deal with our enemies? Christ said that we should love our enemies and do good to them. He said, "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44,45).

But *how* can we love our enemies, those who hate us, despitefully use us, and persecute us? By *human nature* it would be impossible, but Christians are to grow in partaking of the *nature of God*, according to instructions given in 2 Peter 1:4: ". . . by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these **you may be partakers of divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**" The answer, therefore, is in having an agape love (the Greek word for the highest form of love) for them. What kind of love is that? It is not an *emotional love* but, rather, *it seeks what is best for that person, even though he would do you harm.* Such a godly love prompts you to return good for evil. You would not try to hurt him or to cause him to be lost. Rather, you want that person to be saved. You want to help him and hopefully to change him. That is the kind of love the Lord had for us when He laid down His life for us—while we were still enemies and alienated from God by our sins. We didn't deserve such love, grace, and mercy, but He loved us anyway. As brothers and sisters in His family, the church, we are to have that type of love for the lost, for the sinner, and for our enemies.

The Lord has not left it up to us to take the law into our hands and to punish the wicked, those who would hurt us and do us wrong. It is not up to us to seek revenge. We are to leave that to the law of the land and to God who will judge them and sentence them on the day of judgment.

At the hands of evil terrorists more than six thousand people lost their lives in the U.S.A. on September 11 when the World Trade Towers were destroyed. Innocent men, women, and children of more than eighty nations were killed, and the whole world has suffered from the destruction in many ways. As individuals who lost loved ones, we could take it upon ourselves

to try to punish the terrorists. But that is not the job of individuals, and it is certainly not the responsibility of Christians. To individual Christians, Paul was instructed by the Holy Spirit to write, *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:17-21).

There is a great difference, though, between individuals and civil governments. To the one God says, "Love your enemies," but to the other He says, "You are my sword to execute wrath on evil doers." Therefore, **governments of countries around the world** are God's agencies to control lawlessness and to punish those who would harm the helpless. According to the New Testament, we are commanded, *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil"* (Romans 13:1-4).

And God, Himself, will have the final word as He executes judgment on that great day, when evil doers and the disobedient receive His condemnation for the evil they have done. *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the book. . . . And they were judged, each one according to his works. . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"* (Revelation 20:12-15).

"Oh, I Don't Have Time For That . . ."

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Let me tell you a little story.

She wasn't lazy, this Anita. Nobody could say that. She was the personification of neatness. Shoes and purse always matched each other and her clothes, and there were no wrinkles in what she wore. Her family reflected the same concern. Whatever time and thought were necessary for a well-groomed appearance for all under her car, she invested and felt good about it.

Her house! Why, it looked like a "House Beautiful" story! Nothing was ever allowed to grow old or out of date, and no dust dulled the sparkling finish on the furniture. She cleaned meticulously, and she took great joy in renewing that room this year, this one next, and so on. Anita lavished attention on every detail about her family's home.

And the yard! Weeds wouldn't dare grow—well, they didn't have time, because Anita allowed a few minutes each morning to checking the beds and pulling whatever was showing its presumptuous head. But she didn't stop there. During the summer she had a huge garden. She planted and hoed and picked and shelled and froze and canned until she felt like a sanctimonious ant. Her family would not want for anything during the winter months!

Of course the same attention and perfection went into her "mothering." Each child felt that he was the center of the world. Anita fussed over the special likes and dislikes in foods, in particular clothes and brands and styles, in toys and entertainment; she went to all the ball games and all the little school performances; she was a room mother, and active band mother, a scout leader. She went to bed at night with her tongue hanging out, knowing that she had been 150% mother, and no one lacked attention.

Not even her husband! Oh, Bob was something special and

she made it the aim of her days to let him know it. She was all attention of his needs, all sympathy to his moods. As a wife, Anita was second to none.

But she wasn't just a slave to her family. Anita looked at the options which brought enjoyment to herself, and she developed skills in many of those things. She took painting lessons and worked into her schedule the time for the occasional small scale masterpiece. She also kept an eye on the new crafts that came along; cross-stitching, soft-sculpture, smocking, the array of wood crafts to enhance her already beautiful home. All of these things were such useful fun, and the finished products were absolutely wonderful. They gave a homey, cared-for look to her house, a loving-mothered look to her children. Ah! Life was so fulfilling and so good!

Yes . . . the good life . . .

So many good Christians enjoy it. They even enjoy dressing up their little family and taking them off to "church". Being able to sit and hear religious wisdom in answer to daily needs is icing on the cake, rounding out the corners of life and making everything just right.

But teaching a class? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Setting up home Bible studies with those who aren't Christians? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Using that beautiful home for hospitality, bearing fruit for God? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Getting involved with non-Christians in the community who have problems and need spiritual or emotional or physical or financial help? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Visiting the sick or unfaithful, looking for ways to help them? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Visiting the sick or unfaithful, looking for ways to help them? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Helping the Bible Correspondence work? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

Getting involved in the work of evangelizing the neighbourhood and the world? "Oh, I don't have time for that . . ."

We need to sit down in this pretty world of ours and take stock. Maybe we've written the rules as we want them to read and haven't paid much attention to what God has said about our Christian responsibilities.

No, there is nothing wrong with being a good wife and mother and homemaker—or a good husband and father and provider. In fact, these things are good, and we must fulfill our responsibilities in these areas. But the dangerous thing is that our very existence can be “eaten up” with these physical things that are good and right, so that we literally *don't have time for the spiritual commitments* we made when we became Christians; and because our busyness is morally right, we may never hear a warning bell going off in our heads; in fact, we may blindly go on feeling very good about ourselves and the use of our time.

But Christianity was not designed to be, first of all, a self-serving life. If we use it simply as an asset to ourselves, to round out our own already full life, we are misusing it. Jesus set the example for us: He came, not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). His brethren are instructed, “. . . *through love serve one another*” (Galatians 5:13).

Christians must be doing the work that will bear fruit. Matthew 3:10 says, “. . . *therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*” Not having time to share the truth and Christian love and concern with others is not just busyness; it is having wrong priorities and therefore making wrong things out of seeming good things that may be right, in and of themselves.

Probably this “good life”, this attitude of being busy about “good” things, this lack of setting the right priorities for the use of our time, talents, influence, and money is **one of Satan's most powerful tools**. Let us be careful. Admittedly, he is out to get us with whatever works most effectively on us. Maybe it's just being “busy.”

Preach The Word

FRANCIS DAVID

While writing to the young preacher Timothy, apostle Paul had to say these words, which are useful for every preacher who preaches the truth. He says: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ; who will judge the living and the dead

at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word Be ready in season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching." A preacher has a great responsibility towards God and the people. Unfortunately, some preachers do not do their job as they should, and they take this work very lightly and because of this the work of God suffers.

Sometimes, people raise their fingers on the work and attitude of preachers. I have heard some people say that such a preacher is not living a right life or a sinful life. For this, we must go to the word of God and find what kind of man preacher should be. Paul was himself a preacher and we find that he tells his fellow preachers that they should emulate him. He was one of the finest example of preachers. He was the kind of preacher who would discipline his body and bring it into subjection. (I Cor. 9:27). Why he was discipling himself? The reason he gives that I don't want that I should preach to others and I myself become disqualified. How many times we as preachers make ourselves as disqualified ones through our bad actions. We need to take this job very seriously.

First of all a preacher must understand that he is not a big man, who has some people or a congregation in his control. A preacher is a servant. He is the servant of the Lord and this service is very important in the kingdom of God. In 2 Tim. 2:24, we read, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle . . ." Jesus, our Lord set an example and He was actually teaching his disciples that how they must serve one another. He washed their feet and taught them that they must possess the same spirit of a servant. (Matt. 13).

As we read and study the Bible we see that a preacher must possess many good characteristics. He has many challenges in life and he must go forward to these things in the light of the Word of God. He must be pure and holy. He should not indulge in bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, chewing paan or eating gutkha. To Timothy he writes: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity (I Tim. 4:12). His aim should be godliness. He must follow godliness (I Tim. 4:7), because godliness with contentment is great gain. (I Tim. 6:6). He must treat all the members with kindness and gentleness and favouritism should be avoided. Again he writes to

Timothy by saying: "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. (1 Tim. 5:21).

Sometime, certain preachers always think about money. They are greedy for money. They like to spend or expect to make more money rather than to preach and evangelise. If you desire to be rich or make lot money then think, what Paul says: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Tim. 6:9,10). How many times we see some preachers indulge in money making business and thus destroy themselves spiritually.

A preacher and his family always give first priority to the church and spirituality. They must set good examples before the congregation. His children should not forsake the assemblies. He must take control of his children. He must live upto his reputation. Your reputation is a great thing in your life and if you destroy it, then it would be very hard to bring it back on the same track. You might be a good, well known, kind and gentle preacher and people respect you but you may lose that because of your bad attitude or actions. So the best advise would be to keep up your reputation.

A preacher must study his Bible. As a preacher of the gospel, do you study your Bible and also the Christian literature? We must know what the book says. We see that Paul instructs Timothy to read and study the word of God. He says: "Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15).

Lastly, we see how can you become a successful preacher. You can become a successful preacher by always preaching the truth and you must do that in season and out of season, because this is what God expects from you. (2 Tim. 4:2). You must speak the truth in Love. (Eph. 4:15). You must practice what you preach and this is very important. (1 Cor. 9:27). Fellow preachers, we have been given a great responsibility to preach the gospel of Christ. If we don't do it or if we are irresponsible

then we have to give an account. Paul says: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me, yes, WOE is me if I do not preach the gospel. (I Cor. 9:16). **PREACH THE WORD, brother!**

Let The Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

Did God foretell of the establishment of His church? There are many prophecies relating to the Messiah and the church that He would build. The Holy Spirit tells us in 1 Peter 1:10 that the Old Testament prophets desired to know more about the things revealed to them by the Spirit. Now that God's Word has been completely revealed (Jude 3), we can see the complete picture of His church as foretold in the Old Covenant. The many prophecies were given so that one can identify the Messiah and could understand His mission (to give His life a ransom for many, Mt. 26:28, and to establish His spiritual body, the church, Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18). These prophecies prove that the church was not an after thought as some teach but was His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10-11). Let us notice a few prophecies concerning His establishment of the church.

In Daniel 2:44 one can read that during the days of the Roman Empire, God would set up His kingdom. Jesus was born (Lk. 2:1), lived and died during its reign. God promised David that the Christ would be born of his seed and would rule upon his throne (2 Sam. 7:12-13). The Holy Spirit tells us that this seat of authority is forever in Heaven (Ps. 89:35-37). Isaiah reveals in the second chapter, verses two and three, that the church would be established in the last days, that all people could become members of it, that they come to it by being taught (see, also, John 6:45 and Rom. 10:17), and that it would begin in the city of Jerusalem. Acts 2 shows us that the last days began with Christ (Acts 2:17) and that the church began in the city of Jerusalem as prophesied. Daniel also informs us that the Kingdom would be established after Christ had ascended up to Heaven (Dan. 7:13-14), and the Holy Spirit tells that this was where Christ was when

the church was built (Acts 2:33,36). Another prophecy is found in Zechariah 6:13, which informs us that Jesus would be King and Priest over His church at the same time. Jesus now is serving in both capacities (1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 4:14).

These prophecies tell us many things about His church, Jesus said that His church and His kingdom are one and the same (Mt. 16:18-19). We encourage you to obey the gospel, come to Christ, and be added by God to His kingdom (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9).

“Be Strong and Courageous”

DAVID THURMAN

Churches all over the world are struggling to be what God wants them to be. The struggle may include methods and ideas about how to best serve God in a particular locale. The struggle may include some discussions about the opportunities God puts in front of a particular body of believers. As churches and church leaders strive to move God's people forward, where can they go to find God's way of leading His people to victory?

The first chapter of the book of Joshua gives principles for leading God's people to greater successes. The children of Israel have spent 40 years in the wilderness under Moses' leadership. During that time they have had no permanent home and the older generation has died off, due to their unbelief. And, on top of all that, the leadership is changing. Moses had died and Joshua has been put in command of God's people. Now God challenges them to move forward, to take the land of Canaan. They can no longer sit back. They must do something to accomplish the mission God has set before them. So, God gives them a plan and challenges them to believe in Him enough to obey Him and follow that plan. The principles of a plan that will work are found in Joshua 1.

FORGET THE PAST

“Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun,

Moses' assistant, saying Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel" (Josh. 1:1-2). God spells it out. Moses is dead. There is no time to look back or dwell on the past. Joshua must look forward. No matter what successes they had achieved, no matter what failures they had experienced, the time was right to put the past aside and move forward. Churches today must do the same.

For a church to honour god's will, it must look ahead, not back. This is not to say we should ignore the good done by previous generations. Great churches are built on the great ministry done by servants for many decades. Those servants and their work should be honoured. But God doesn't want us living in the past. Canaan lies ahead and we are challenged to move forward and take the land. We cannot do that dwelling on the "good old days." Joshua had to lead the people forward. God begins by reminding him, "*Moses is dead.*"

GRASP GOD'S VISION

"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." (Josh 1:3-6).

God spells out to Joshua what He sees as the future of His people. God describes the boundaries of the land they will conquer. He describes the attitude of the people who lived in the land at the time. The nation God would create would be large and strong. The enemies of that nation would be weak and frightened. And God assures Joshua that He would be with him, just as He had been with Moses. Joshua had seen God's mighty hand work through Moses. Now he is told that the same God would work through Him.

Churches today must grasp God's vision as well. Too often

churches chase issues or problems that have little or nothing to do with God's vision for the church. Listen to the command of Jesus: *"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus wants the leaders and believers in a church to make disciples from among all people. He wants churches to build up those believers by teaching them to observe all that God has commanded. The task before the church today has not changed. We must reach the lost and build up the saved. Anything a church does that fails to accomplish one, or both, of these goals is busy work, not God's vision.

Better still, we have the promise of the presence of Jesus while we seek to do this. *"Lo, I am with you always"* applies to us today as much as it did to Joshua or to the disciples who heard Jesus speak these words. God doesn't just point us in the right direction. He promises to lead us so that our enemies will not stand before us, either. In fact, Jesus assures us we will gain the victory in our battle against Satan. *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). Jesus tells us, just as God told Joshua, that we will be victorious. What we must do is rise up and take the land. The victory is already assured.

OBEY GOD'S REVEALED WILL

"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh 1:7-8). A second time God encourages Joshua to be strong and courageous. This time He reminds Joshua to be obedient to all that God had commanded.

God is specific: Joshua is not to turn to the right or to the left. He is not to stray from God's law in any way. Joshua is to insure this by knowing the law, speaking of the law and meditating on the law day and night.

Churches and Christians today need to return to the same standard. We must learn to dwell on God's word and let it be our guide. We must then be careful to obey all we see the God's word. Too many ignore God's word by relying on what they have always heard. They never open the word of God, or their minds, to grow and see what God says. They simply repeat what they have heard from their preachers or their church "creeds." Others ignore God's word by rejecting what it clearly teaches on worship or baptism or many other subjects. We should not turn to the left or to the right, but remain obedient to what God has said. When we are obedient to God's revealed will, Satan will crumble before us and we will be prosperous. That is God's promise.

Joshua had been there, he had seen what happened when God's people sinned. He had been there when the previous generation had rejected God's plan to take the land of Canaan. When sin and doubt were in the camp, Joshua knew what would happen. So, God reminds him to be careful to obey all the commands: even the ones that seem strange, or meaningless, or hard, or impossible. Sin had kept the people of God from taking the land 40 years prior to this. Sin could get in the way again. So, they are to be obedient.

Churches, church leaders and Christians today must face this reality as well. Sin can enter the camp from the right or the left. People can stop listening to God and start listening to their favourite preacher, leader or friend. To conquer the land before us, we must be obedient to God, not our wants or our favourites.

LISTEN TO GOD

Please understand how important it is to listen to God and to no other voices. That is why we will continue to challenge people with the word of God. God has the answers to life's problems and God can lead a people to take the land of Canaan. If you will listen to God, put your trust in Him, repent of your sins and be baptized into His name, He will forgive you and make you His child. Listen to God and obey Him today.

“We Will Serve Jehovah”

JOHNNY RAMSEY

One of the most brilliant speeches ever given can be found in the last two chapters of the book of Joshua. That valiant man of God presents a farewell address never to be forgotten. As Joshua is about to die, he challenges the people of Israel to the very depths of their loyalty in spiritual matters. For fifty years, in the conquest of Canaan, that devoted successor of Moses had blessed the seed of Abraham with power and prestige they would never again know, due to their own apostasy. Many of them were already on the verge of turning their backs upon Jehovah to follow the pagan gods of other nations. At a most strategic moment in history, the aged Joshua declared: *“But, as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah”* (Josh. 24:15).

Joshua had told them to recall all that God had given to them, and what He had done for them. Yes, houses, lands, vineyards and orchards, protection and guidance had been beneficently bestowed upon them. Verily, a land *“flowing with milk and honey”* (Num. 13:27; Josh. 5:6) had been their treasure. Sadly, in spite of all these benevolent gifts, they limited the Holy One of Israel (Psa. 78:41) by their ingratitude and shameful hearts. Shakespeare had a line that fits here perfectly: *“They committed the oldest sins in the newest kind of ways.”*

It is not easy to take a stand for the Lord when all around us we see multitudes who have a deep disdain for godliness and integrity. But sincere devotion to God and honest appreciation ought to propel us into a closer walk with divine mandates. In a magnificent hymn we see how compelling the genuine love of Jehovah should be in our lives:

*Wherever He may guide me
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
He knows the way He taketh
And I will walk with Him.*

The value of choosing properly is a lesson taught from

cover to cover in the Bible. Abel and Enoch, Noah and Joseph are four wonderful examples from Genesis poignantly telling us how imperative it is to turn our back upon popularity in the temporal realm and to build pursuit of eternal glory. We find strong and scriptural motivation for holiness and consecration in the divine arena: *“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love Jehovah your God . . . O give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever”* (Josh. 23:11; 1 Chron. 16:34).

Far too many have returned to the cesspool of iniquity. As a result, their influence is on Satan's side. The easy way out will be the saddest decision they ever made and that for all eternity! Thankfully, some have stuck with the Lord “through thick and thin.” Their never-wavering loyalty will influence others to walk the narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14). Joshua set a noble example. Strength of character demands the same of us. A great song reminds us:

*Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store;
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, Christian, love me more.*

“Is Knowledge Really All That Important?”

GREG HARMON

Most religious people have very little respect for the knowledge of the truth. They spend more time working on the emotional aspect of religion and neglect study and meditation of the Word. People have told me that God no longer uses the Bible to save souls, but rather speaks directly to individuals and reveals the plan of salvation to them. This is not only a confusing doctrine, but it is a damnable one. We are going to consider what the Bible teaches about knowledge and determine if it's “really all that important.”

Jesus once said, “And ye shall know the truth and the truth

shall make you free" (John 8:32). Christ is teaching that knowing the truth is what will set a person free. On another occasion, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). So, we can see that knowing the truth will set us free and that the truth is the Word of God.

But, what kind of knowledge are we talking about? The Greek word for know is "gnosis," which simply means "to know something." It is a very simple and basic word. The word that we are going to be focussing on is the Greek word "epignosis," which is a more intense word that gives the impression of "... participation in the object of knowledge on the part of the subject." This is not just to know something, but to be involved with what is known. All of the passages we will be discussing have the word "epignosis" contained in them.

As we have already noticed, knowing the truth (Word) of God is what sets one free. Paul told Timothy, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:3-4). In order for all men to be saved, what would they have to do? Come to the knowledge (epignosis) of the truth.

Paul explained to the Ephesians, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). But, how does God multiply His grace unto us? Peter answers, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge (epignosis) of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (II Peter 1:2). Reviving God's grace (unmerited favour) is the only way we can ever expect to be saved, and it is multiplied unto us through the knowledge of God. Peter goes one step further when he said, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge (epignosis) of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). All things that are pertinent unto life and godliness are provided through the knowledge of God. Peter sends the message home when he said, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge (epignosis) of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (II Peter 2:20). In this life, we are either in the world or the church. There is no middle ground on which to stand. Those who have escaped the pollutions of the world have been placed into the Kingdom of

Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13). But, how is this done? "... Through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I'm afraid that numbers of people believe that if a person is sincere, how he worships God and lives for Him is not important. Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome and talked about his own brethren in the flesh, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge (epignosis). For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3). This is one of the saddest passages in all the Bible. Here you have a group of people that have a zeal (strong devotion) of God, but not according to knowledge, and because of this, they were lost. How many people fit this description today? As members of the Lord's Body, we have the responsibility to tell others about the saving knowledge (epignosis) of Jesus Christ.

Is knowledge really all that important? Absolutely! Because without it we would have been unable to obey properly the Gospel of Christ, and then begin to live for Him.

Now that we have a greater appreciation for the knowledge of God, we can fully understand why the apostle Paul would say, "For this cause we also . . . desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10).

Is The Church Of Christ A Denomination?

WALTER SWAIM

Is the church of Christ a denomination? This is one of the most important questions facing the Lord's church today. It seems strange that such a question should even be asked, but it is even stranger that it is being asked by those in the church more and more, and not just by those outside the church.

It is not surprising that those outside the Lord's church

would ask such a question, considering their understanding of the church; but it is surprising that those in the church, who should know better, are asking it. The very heart and core of the restoration movement has been dedicated to the elimination of denominations and divisions in the church. This is fully in keeping with Jesus' own plea for unity of believers in John 17 and with Paul's urging for that unity in I Corinthians 1:10. Any consideration of the church of Christ as a denomination would seem to cancel out the need of a restoration at all.

Let us seek to answer the above question in light of the teaching of the Scriptures. We can do this by asking two questions. First, "What is the church of Christ?" Secondly, "What is a denomination?" If these two answers do not agree, obviously, then, the church of Christ is not a denomination.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

1. It is the church Jesus promised to build and did build. In Matthew 16:18, the Lord said He would build His church. This promise was made during His ministry. Jesus promised to build only one church, and it was to be His church.

2. It is the church which began on the day of Pentecost, 33 A.D., in the city of Jerusalem. Acts chapter 2 relates this birthday of the Lord's church. Any church not having this birthday is not the Lord's church.

3. It is the church to which God adds the saved (Acts 2:41, 47). One cannot join the church of Christ. The same thing that saves a person also allows God to add that person to the church at the same time one is saved. Paul says we are all baptized into one body, the church (I Corinthians 12:13).

4. It is the one church spoken of in Ephesians 4:4. Paul says there is but one body. In Colossians 1:18, he tells us that Christ is the head of the body, the church. If there is but one body, and the body is the church, there can be only one church.

5. It is the church following the pattern of the New Testament in organization, worship, morality, and evangelism (II John 9-11; II Timothy 4:1-4; Jude 3; and Revelation 22:18-19).

WHAT IS A DENOMINATION?

The word "denomination" literally means "a class designa-

tion, name; epithet; appellation" or, "A body of believers having a distinguishing name." We would ask, "to distinguish it from what?"

This definition of a denomination shows that a denomination is a part of something. But, it cannot be a part of the true church, as the church is one and is not divided into differing churches. The denominating of the church makes it something different from the church that Jesus built.

Therefore, a denomination:

1. Is not the church Jesus built, since Jesus built but one church and that is His church. Denominations were started by someone other than Jesus.

2. Is not the church begun in 33 A.D. Every denomination has its own starting time that can be traced to one definite date in history. None of them began in 33 A.D. but all came afterwards. Therefore, none of them can be the Lord's church.

3. Is not the church to which God adds the saved. Most denominations do not even teach what the Bible says one must do to be saved. One cannot hear error, believe error, and obey error and do what is right to enable God to add them to the church. People join denominations. God adds the saved to the body of Christ, the church. This is why there cannot be denominations right with God.

4. Is not one, but is a part of something, even according to their own teaching. They teach that each denomination makes up the "invisible body of Christ." They often say themselves, "We are all going to the same place, just by different routes" or, they declare, "Join the church of your choice." Thus their own teaching shows they are not one.

5. Is not following the pattern for the church given in the New Testament Scriptures. The fact they differ in doctrine, worship, organization, and mission shows they are not the Lord's church. The church of Christ is not a denomination. It is the exact opposite of what a denomination is by definition. The true church is no more a denomination than a train is a bus, or a cow is a goat. They are two different things. Anyone who says the church of Christ is a denomination is either ignorant of the teaching of the Bible, or is deliberately perverting the truth.

Jesus prayed that the church would be one. Paul commanded that unity in I Corinthians 1:10. It is up to us to

honor both the teaching of Jesus and Paul and maintain the unity of the body of Christ.

The Most Important Question In The World

ROD RUTHERFORD

The most important question in the world is, "What must I do to be saved?" how one answers this question will determine whether he goes to Heaven or to Hell. Our Lord Jesus Christ very clearly answered it in the Great Commission. There are three passages where the Great Commission of our Lord is found. Let us consider them so that we may learn from the Lord Himself what we must do to have eternal life.

The Bible teaches that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Paul says that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The death spoken of here is eternal separation from God in Hell (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 21:8). All who have sinned deserve to be sent to Hell forever. God, however, loves man even though man has disobeyed Him. He wants to save man from the punishment he deserves. Therefore, God gave the plan of salvation through which He could still be just, but at the same time, show mercy. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God gave this plan because of His own grace and goodness, not because man deserved it. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10; Romans 5:6-8).

The apostle Paul wrote: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The Bible teaches that man cannot earn his salvation. He cannot remove his sins by his own goodness. Without God's help, he will justly suffer for his sins forever in Hell. Works of

human righteousness cannot save (Titus 3:4-7). Our salvation was made possible when Jesus died on the cross in our place as our sin offering (II Corinthians 5:19-21). The death of Christ for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection from the dead are the foundation of the Gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). The Gospel of Christ is our only hope for salvation. Christ is the only Savior. He is the only way to God and to eternal life (John 8:24; 14:6; Hebrews 5:8-9; Acts 4:11-12). This is the reason the Gospel must be preached to every nation and to every person in the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-47). How does man receive salvation from his sins which God, by His grace, has made possible? The Bible is very plain. One would hardly expect it to be otherwise on such an important issue. After His death, burial, and resurrection, our Lord gave marching orders to His disciples. We have a clear account of this in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

The Gospel must be taught to all nations. Christianity is a "taught religion." People cannot be saved who have not heard the Gospel. One must hear the Gospel and understand it in order to believe (Romans 10:17). Those who believe the Gospel must also be baptized in order to be saved.

The Great Commission of our Lord is also found in Mark 16:15-16: "And He said to them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved: but he who does not believe will be condemned." The disciples of Christ are commanded to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Those who hear must then believe and be baptized in order to be saved. The Lord did not say, "He who believes is saved and shall be baptized" as many today teach. This would mean that one is saved by belief alone without baptism. The Lord clearly placed both belief and baptism before salvation from sins.

The Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ is also recorded in Luke 24:46-47: "Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and

remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem." Here we have the foundation facts of the Gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and arose from the dead the third day (I Corinthians 15:1-4). The Gospel must be preached to all nations. Those who truly repent and obey are promised remission of sins.

We must not do as many cults do. They take only part of what the Bible teaches on a subject. Neither must we be guilty of using one Scripture to oppose another. We must take all that God's Word says on any subject in order to learn the truth. Therefore, when we place the three accounts of the Great Commission together, we will learn what we must do in order to be saved.

1. Christ's disciples must preach the Gospel to every creature (person) in every nation, in the whole world.

2. The fundamental points of the Gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

3. Those who hear the Gospel must respond by believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God (this implies a public confession of that faith—Romans 10:8-10).

4. They must repent of all their past sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38).

5. They must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Romans 6:4-5; Acts 2:38).

6. The result of those who respond in this way is that they have their sins forgiven and are saved.

God has provided man's salvation as a gift (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8). Man, however, must receive God's gracious gift. He does this by responding in the manner described in the accounts of the Great Commission of our Lord as discussed above.

Dear reader, do you have eternal life? Salvation from sins and the promise of eternal life can be yours if you will receive God's gift in the way He has appointed.

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