

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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**Vol. 34**

**February 2004**

**No. 10**

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## *EDITORIAL*

### **What Does the Bible Teach?**

*“And He is the head of the body, the church . . .”*

Sometime people ask, where is the headquarter of the church of Christ? Christ, the Bible says, is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18), and the Head, Christ, is in heaven. Therefore, the headquarters of the church of Christ is in heaven. There is no headquarters on earth of the church of Christ. No man on earth is the head of the church of Christ. The Bible authorizes no headquarters of the church of Christ on earth anywhere. All over the world there are numerous congregations of the church of Christ. These are all independent, governed in every place by the authority of Christ only, through His New Testament of the Bible. They all believe the same thing. They all speak the same thing. They all worship in the same way. And all are trying to follow Christ and His written authority. No matter, where they are on earth, they all believe that to be saved from sin one must believe in Christ and repent of sins and be baptized for the remission of sins by His authority. (MK 16:16; Acts 2:38). They are all called by the name, to whom they belong, church of Christ. (MT. 16:18). They follow no traditions or doctrines of men. (Mt. 15:9). They do not call leaders in the church by titles, such as, Reverend and Father.

(Psm 111:9; Matthew 23:9). As members of the church of Christ they are called Christians (Acts 11:26), and by no other name they are known. They are calling Bible things by Bible names, and doing Bible things in Bible way. They speak where the Bible speak and maintain silence where the Bible is silent. When they come for worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) in any place on earth as the church of Christ they partake of the Lord's Supper according to the command and will of Christ (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). And they sing spiritual songs without the accompaniment of any musical instrument (Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 13:15). The word of God is preached and meditated upon, and not the testimonies of men are heard. (2 Timothy 4:2). Prayers are led by men in the congregations of the churches of Christ (Luke 18:1). Women do not lead prayers or teach or preach or speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11,12). If there are men in a congregation of the church who possess the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9, then such men could be appointed as bishops (also called: Pastors, Eph. 4:11; Overseers or Shepherds or Elders; (Acts 20:17 & 28; 1 Peter 5:1-3), and Deacons, to serve in that particular congregation of which they are members. Spiritually speaking, the church is the body of Christ. He is the head and all others are members of the body. In a physical body there are different members and they do different things but everything they do is for the betterment of the body, and all follow the head. Likewise in the church of Christ there are different kinds of people who belong to different nations, of different colours and cultures, and speak different languages. But they all follow the same head who guides them through His written will of the New Testament of the Bible. To become a member of the church of Christ one need not take permission from any man or fill any membership forms. Because the Church belongs to Christ, and those who follow His instructions, He Himself adds them to His church. (Acts 2:47). There is no such thing as joining the church of Christ. No one can ever anywhere join the church of Christ.

# **Man Wondered What Would Happen In 2002**

**J.C. CHOATE**

A few months before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ended many, were concerned with what would happen. Most people seemed to be looking toward the year 2000 with great anxiety. It was as though we were completing one great phase of history and we were beginning another. Even politically, men vied for the distinction of being the one to lead their country into the 21st Century. Above all, the ending of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 21st Century was thought to be a momentous occasion for many religious groups around the world.

Actually, as it turned out, the change of the century and the millenium was to be no different than the ending of any year and the beginning of another. Particularly, what would be so different about it with the Lord? Remember that Peter said, *"But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* (2 Peter 3:8).

As far as the year 2000 was concerned, how did we know that in the sight of the Lord man's count of the years all the way through from the beginning had been right? The count could have been off by a year or two, or a hundred or more, one way or the other! But even if the number was correct, what difference would that make? A day is a day and a year is a year and in the over-all running of time, the year 2000 was no different to any other year.

Many wanted to be in Jerusalem to welcome the year 2000. They thought that something special would happen at that time, in that place. Some were sure that the Lord would come to begin to reign in the city of Jerusalem with the righteous for one thousand years. The problem with all of the speculation and supposition was that Christ had not promised to come at that time or on any other specific date! Rather, He had said, *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"* (Matthew 24:36). Now if only the Father knows when Christ will come again, how would it be possible for you or me or anyone

else to guess the date? And how would it be possible for us to suppose with any certainty that Christ would come again in the year 2000? He could have come before then, or after that date, but no human had any way of knowing. Such matters are in God's hands, and we should leave them there.

Then concerning the question of the Lord coming back to Jerusalem to reign over the righteous for 1000 years, that is ridiculous. The Bible nowhere teaches such a doctrine. Why would Jesus come back to earth again? He came one time and was rejected and crucified. Why should he come again? What would be the purpose? When Christ returned to the Father in heaven, the record says that two men robed in white appeared and said that Jesus would return in like manner, that is, in the clouds. (Acts 1:11). They did not say, however, that He would ever come and set His foot on earth again. Paul specifically stated that when the Lord returns, **we will be caught up into the clouds to meet him and there we shall ever be with the Lord!** (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). That is not the scene described by those who believe in a "rapture" or a 1000-year reign in a physical kingdom in Jerusalem! But who spoke by inspiration of God—Paul or modern-day denominational preachers?

There were also those who were making a big to-do over the "Y2K" (Year 2 Thousand) problem, fearing that all the computers would fail and bring to a halt every computerized process in the world! We were encouraged to store up water and food and some cash for the beginning of 2000, until the computer problems could be corrected and things could be put back in order. Some downplayed this scare by saying that most of the anticipated problems with the date change had already been solved. Now we know that they had been.

Anyway, the important thing now in the 21st Century, and as long as time shall stand, is to believe in God and accept Christ as the saviour by obeying His teaching: believing and being baptized to be saved and added to the Lord's church, and being faithful to Him so that we'll be prepared to meet him when he comes again—regardless of when that time may be. (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1-3; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47; Revelation 2:10).

# **What Kind Of Builder Are You?**

**FRANCIS DAVID**

Jesus while talking to the people talked about two builders, who built their houses. In Mathew chapter seven we read as Jesus says: "Therefore whoever hears these things of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will like a Foolish man who built his house on the Sand: "and rain descended, the floods came and the wind blew and beat on that house and it fell. And great was its fall. (Matt. 7:24-27). We learn great lessons from these two builders. The house which was built on the rocky foundation was standing and the rains, flood and the winds could not do any damage to it but on the other hand we see the sandy house had its great fall, because its foundation was weak.

We are building our houses spiritually everyday, and we need to be careful how we build. Every house needs a strong foundation and our spiritual house too needs a strong foundation and the strong foundation is Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, ". . . and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Yes, Jesus is the rock and He is the foundation of that church. The wise man will build his foundation on Jesus and be a part of the church which Jesus built. On the day of Pentecost, those who were baptized were part of this foundation because they were added to the body, the church which Jesus built. (Acts 2:47). Paul says in I Cor. 3:10-11, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We must be careful how we build because there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" Acts 4:12. All the saved are liken to a spiritual building which is erected upon a solid foundation which is Jesus.

My friend, do you have your foundation on Jesus? Do you

wear the name Christian? According to the Bible we need to be Christians because our foundation is Jesus Christ. There are three verses in the Bible where we read the name Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28 and I Pet. 4:16). We are not supposed to be Methodist Christians or Baptist Christians. No where in the Scriptures we find the names Baptist, Methodist, Lutherans etc. If we wear these names that means our foundation is weak and not totally built on Jesus the rock.

If our foundation is built on human traditions and doctrines then it means we have built our house on the sand. Many of my good friends do not believe that baptism is for salvation. According to them, its not one of the conditions of salvation. But what about Mark 16:16, "He that believes and is baptize will be saved." Who will be saved? The one who believes and is baptized. Isn't it simple? Some say that one church is as good as another. The Bible says there is only one body which is the church and Christ is the head of that body. (Eph. 4:4, Col. 1:18). Are you in the Lord's church, if not then you need to check the foundation of your spiritual house.

What about religious division in Christianity? There is so much division. All have their own teaching, traditions and doctrines. Why don't we all come to the Bible and follow one pattern based on the Scriptures? Division means we have built our foundation on the sand. We are like that foolish builder who did not care for the foundation.

What kind of builders are we? Just check and find out about your spiritual foundation. Is my spirituality built on the rock or on the sand?

## *Jesus—Our Good Shepherd*

**THOMAS R. DOHLING**

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me ... and I lay down My life for the sheep"  
(see John 10:11,14,15).

This is for those who are wandering aimlessly without a shepherd to lead and guide them. This is to tell you that there is

One Who wants to be your Shepherd and Guide Who wants to keep you in His care and lead you all the way home to be with Him forever. It is also for those who have wandered from the fold, following their own lead. My plea is that you'd return to the fold of the One who laid down His life for you.

Let us look at the Good Shepherd.

He says, "I know My own" and He knows that "My own know Me." He also says, "I lay down My life for the sheep." He further goes on to say in the same passage, "even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." That is how He knows His own: that's how intimate He is with His own!

O joyful passage this, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd" (v 16). We are the "other" sheep who have heard His sweet voice saying, "Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28). He asserted, "I **MUST** bring them ... they **WILL** become one flock with one shepherd." Sweet Shepherd of our souls, how beautiful You are! You desired to be our Good Shepherd: you desired us to be Your sheep. You desired to possess us! O sweet thought. We **KNOW** that with such a Good Shepherd we shall "not be in want" (Psalm 23:1). You will provide **ALL** of our needs.

Let us, for a moment, get a picture of the shepherd of Jesus' day and time:

The duties of a shepherd in an unenclosed country like Palestine were very onerous. "In early morning he led forth the flock from the fold, marching at its head to the spot where they were to be pastured. Here he watched them all day, taking care that none of the sheep strayed, and if any for a time eluded his watch and wandered away from the rest, seeking diligently till he found and brought it back. In those lands sheep require to be supplied regularly with water, and the shepherd for this purpose has to guide them either to some running stream or to wells dug in the wilderness and furnished with troughs. At night he brought the flock home to the fold, counting them as they passed under the rod at the door to assure himself that none were missing. Nor did his labours always end with sunset. Often he had to guard the fold through the dark hours from the attack of wild beasts, or the

wily attempts of the prowling thief (see Isa. 17:34)." Deane's David (Easton).

So, we get a picture of what Jesus was talking about and what He meant when He said, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me ... and I lay down My life for the sheep."

Being in the fold, we hear His voice every morning calling us by name (if we are sensitive to His call and are aware of Him) and we are reassured of His care throughout the day. We know that He will take care of all our needs (both physical and spiritual - more particularly spiritual). We are safe in His abiding presence knowing that He will take care of us and deliver us from all harm (evil) that would threaten our souls. His rod will keep the enemy at bay and His staff will pull us back to the fold when we go astray (see Psalm 23:4). Since He is our Good Shepherd, He knows what is best for us and He provides according to our needs. He "restores our soul and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake" - because He wants only good for us which comes by following Jesus in the right path, the path that He has prepared for us. He overwhelms us with spiritual blessings (Psalm 23:5,6) and even material ones! And, as long as we remain in the fold, we are assured of forever living with our Shepherd (Psalm 23:6). Such is the Good Shepherd's care and concern for us.

O blessed Saviour! Can we doubt your tender care and concern for us after You have demonstrated Your love by laying down Your life for us? Nay, we are reassured of your compassion for "they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:23).

When You return to take us home to be with You forever, we know that we "will receive the crown of glory that doesn't fade away" (1 Peter 5:4). Precious Saviour, keep us in Your fold forever.

## **To Tell The Truth**

**DAVID THURMAN**

What makes honesty so important? Our world has decided that everyone lies. Our culture places little value on integrity. Our



society thinks that dishonesty is part of life. But, honesty was and is still vital.

The life of Jesus proves this. As Jesus journeyed to the cross, He was faced with lies. He answered with truth. His world crucified Him because He dared to tell the truth. When the enemies (and a friend) of Jesus lied, Jesus stood for truth and died. *"And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death; and they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, 'This man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.' And the high priest stood up and said to Him, 'Do You make no answer? What is if that these men are testifying against You?' But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said it your self; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, 'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses?' Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?' They answered and said, 'He is deserving of death!' Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, 'Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?' Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a certain servant-girl came to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them, all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about.' And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man.' And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for the way you talk gives you away.' Then he began to curse and swear, I do not know the man!' And immediately a cock crowed. And Peter remembered the word*

which Jesus had said, 'Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:57-75).

This council, by the law, was not allowed to deliberate at night. They break their rules in order to convict Jesus. The most important thing to these Jewish leaders was executing Jesus, not being men of integrity. They solicit perjury in order to convict the Lord. And, only a few yards from this kangaroo trial, Peter lies, denying Jesus three times. Notice what happens and how dishonest people get their way.

### **BY IGNORING WHAT IS RIGHT**

These leaders never seem to consider the right thing. They just want to railroad Jesus onto a cross. Maybe they were worried Jesus would stir up trouble from the Romans. Maybe they were worried Jesus was becoming more popular than they were. Maybe they just didn't like Jesus. But, instead of doing what is right, they do what works for them. People without integrity never worry about doing the right thing, they do the expedient thing.

Peter falls into the same trap. Under the stress of being called out, he lies. Peter too doesn't seem to stop and think about the right thing to do. He simply follows his instincts to survive and lies.

The simple lesson is this: to avoid dishonesty, simply do the right thing. If you do the right thing you will not lie. You will always treat others right. You will—just like Jesus—stand up and pay the price. If you want to be a person of integrity, start by doing the right thing in all situations:

### **BY IGNORING WHO IS HURT**

The leaders have an innocent man standing in front of them. They could not care less. They are not bothered that a person is hurt, or even killed by their actions. What mattered to them was not the people who got hurt, but getting their way. Their interests in this episode never went beyond their own selfish views. Justice did not matter, right did not matter, Jesus did not matter.

Again, the apostle Peter makes the same mistake. It was his love for Jesus that caused him to follow and stay nearby. But, his love gets lost in his fear and he lies. Peter leaves Jesus to face His trial all alone. When dishonesty starts, people get hurt.

This is the great problem with lying. Deceit only serves the deceiver. How many spouses have been crushed when they discovered the person they loved most was lying? How many parents have been devastated to learn their children had lied? Dishonesty serves only the liar, and everyone else is immaterial.

### **BY IGNORING WHAT WILL HAPPEN**

The leaders think they will finish Jesus off. After He is dead, His movement will be a thing of history. But Jesus tells them the truth. They will see Him return in judgment. The man they think they are killing will become their King and Judge. Dishonesty may serve these men at the moment, but in the long run they will lose out.

Peter realizes the same thing. He lies three times, becoming more adamant each time. Yet, when it is all over, he finds himself in tears of remorse. Peter escaped with his life, but forgot that lies will come back to haunt him.

This is a basic principle of dishonesty. Inevitably, deceit will return to make your life miserable. One of the great reasons to be honest is that life is simpler and smoother. You can rely on a lie to serve your momentary interests, but in the long run those lies will come back to haunt you. In contrast to the dishonesty of the leaders and Peter, notice how one man standing for the truth can succeed. Jesus (and other honest people) face life.

### **BY LETTING THE EVENT SPEAK THE TRUTH**

Jesus endures this travesty of justice. He doesn't protest or argue. He doesn't raise objections or attempt legal maneuvers. He remains quiet, allowing their actions to speak for themselves. Even when they solicit lies, these religious leaders cannot get a clear story that will convict. Their hypocrisy is obvious to all, without Jesus saying a word.

This is a powerful principle. There are many circumstances in which we can best face lies by just letting the lies be what they are. People with common sense or even a little integrity can readily see the truth. Without saying a word, it is often possible to uncover lies. They speak for themselves. Jesus is comfortable with Who He is. He has lived as God wanted Him to. He can stand silently, while the obvious hypocrisy of His enemies is clear to all.

## **BY LAYING OUT THE TRUTH**

When finally confronted, Jesus laid out the truth for the leaders. He not only owned up to Who He was, He went further to explain what the end result of all this would be. One day He would return in power to judge them all. When confronted, Jesus spoke the truth without hesitation.

Jesus is not cruel, just plain and to the point. They will see what happens. He will be the Christ and will be Lord. This is not done to win an argument, but to prepare everyone for what will happen. Honest people do not attempt to brutalize others with their frankness. Jesus was quiet, then finally spoke the truth. He didn't soften it any, but neither did the Lord make it vicious. We want to speak the truth in love. That is what Jesus did.

## **BY PAYING THE PRICE FOR TRUTH**

Wouldn't it be nice to live in a world where honesty is always rewarded? We sometimes think that is the way life should be. But life is not like that at all. Many times, when a person stands up to tell the truth, he faces incredible opposition. Jesus tells the truth, but no one is happy with Him. In fact, it enrages them all the more, and they mock Him. Jesus pays the price for telling the truth.

Honesty can be hard for this very reason. What parent enjoys hearing the truth from a teen aged son? What spouse enjoys confronting a spouse with the truth? No matter how much we admire those who are honest, we must admit that people of integrity often pay for their integrity with the animosity of others.

## **DISHONESTY IS SELF DECEIT**

I think this is the most important lesson to learn. When you choose a lie over the truth, you are deceiving others. But worse, you are deceiving yourself into thinking this lie won't hurt. You deceive yourself into believing it will not affect your reputation, your relationships, your life. While others will forget all about your lies, they will not forget that you are a liar. They will know you are unreliable. They will know you are untrustworthy. The worst thing about lying is that the liar is the biggest loser.

## INTEGRITY IS SELF EMPOWERMENT

In this entire event only one person succeeds. Jesus is the one who comes away with His integrity intact. He pays for His honesty, but in the end He accomplishes God's will and gains the victory. That is the great secret of honesty. It allows people to live a life of honor and success. Honest people will pay the price for their integrity, but in the end will be people who can live with themselves and do God's will. Lying hurts the liar most. Honesty rewards the honest most. Why tell the truth? Because you win when you do!

### *Holy or Profane ?*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

*"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled; lest there be any fornication, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright" (Heb. 12:14-16).*

The word "*profane*" is defined: "Common, not sacred, secular; irreverent, contempt for sacred things" (Webster). The "*profane person*" is one that is far from the presence of God. Such a person is shallow and truly lacking spirituality. To be holy is to stay near to God, to live in reverence and stand in awe of Deity.

Someone has wisely stated that when one thinks his mind is getting broader, it is only his conscience stretching! The Bible challenges us: "*Like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written. Ye shall be holy; for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Without this quality, we cannot please our Creator (Heb. 12:14-15). Since Jehovah is in charge of everything, we need to remember the words of Daniel, "*Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding*" (Dan. 2:20-21).

It is wise to revere God and the awesome power He manifests. A brilliant song states:

*Be Thou our ruler,  
Guardian, guide and stay,  
Thy word our law,  
Thy path our chosen way.*

Evil may occasionally win, but it never conquers. As the Bible reminds us, *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Prov. 30:5).

When we remain near to the heart of God, it becomes easier to abstain from evil and to pursue godliness. In the wicked and carnal society that engulfs us, we dare not compromise the principles of righteousness. The Lord clearly calls us away from the world and into a sacred focus: *"Commit thy works unto Jehovah, And thy purposes shall be established"* (Prov. 16:3). The trouble with many "profane" people is that they'd rather pray for forgiveness than fight the temptation! To truly walk with the Savior, we must have courage and dedication in the midst of a chaotic scene of debauchery and misery.

When David came to his senses after his shameful escapade with Bathsheba, he declared, *"For I know my transgressions; And my sin is ever before me . . . Hide thy face from my sins. And blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me"* (Psa.51:3,9-10). We will never truly be holy as long as we have disdain for God and the commands He gives us. As Joshua said, *"Only take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you, to love Jehovah your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul"* (Josh. 22:5).

Those folk who seldom think of God do not realize how much they miss in their profane lifestyle. And those who walk in righteousness have blessings beyond measure. Let us take time to be holy and never turn back to the "profane" life of sin and shame!

# ***Fit For the Master's Use***

**W.A. HOLLEY**

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy 2:20-21).

The context of the verses under study shows that false teachers are in view. Paul warns Timothy of "profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness." As examples of false teachers, Hymenaeus and Philetus are brought to the fore. Their teaching had destroyed the faith of some. These teachers had erred from the truth of God.

Paul does not want Timothy to become too discouraged. Despite false teachers and their devastating influence, "the foundation of God standeth sure."

The Lord's church and his word and work will go marching onward. To illustrate his point, Paul uses "a great house" which contains "vessels of gold and silver" and some vessels of wood and stone; some to honor, and some to dishonor."

The Lord's house is his church. We quote: "... that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15).

The church of the Lord is worthy of protection from misguided souls, whether in the church or out. There have been false teachers in the church from apostolic times. For example, "... Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (I Timothy 1:19-20). Others of like persuasion are Demas and Alexander the coppersmith (II Timothy 4:10, 14). Another is Simon who tried to purchase the Holy Spirit with money (Acts 8:13-24). Diotrefes represents another "bad egg" (III John 9-11). Read the story and you will see that those who err from the truth can be restored (Galatians 6:1), if they meet the Lord's conditions of restoration.

In Acts 20:28-31, Paul, speaking to the elders of the church

of Ephesus, said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Read these words again, and ponder their meaning.

Sometimes we are disappointed in elders, deacons, preachers, and other members of the church, because of their failures; but within the church there are many vessels of gold and silver.

Our text says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." What does the word PURGE mean? It means "to clean set thoroughly." False teachers need to cleanse themselves from what? The answer is, cleanse themselves from all false doctrines, from all corrupt affections, and from all sinful actions. To "purge" (John 15:2) is to prune, cut off; in I Corinthians 5:7, the old leaven of sin is to be discarded. In II Timothy 2:21, the thought is that Christians must purge themselves from those who utter profane babblings.

Those who want to be "fit for the Master's use," must be completely sold on the Lord's cause. There is no middle ground (Matthew 6:24). One is the servant of him whom he serves (Romans 6:16). Jesus died for his Cause; so must we be willing to die if we expect to enter heaven (John 6:38; Revelation 2:10). The apostles were so dedicated to Jesus' Cause, they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41-42).

God expects his people to believe and obey the truth (Hebrews 11:6; 5:8-9). Those who "believe for a while, and then fall away," cannot get the job done (Luke 8:13). Faithfulness in demeanor, in Bible study, in prayer, in worship, must be constant pursuits of ours (Titus 2:11-12). Here is the way John expressed these ideas: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the



world. If any man love 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 passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17).

Just here I Corinthians 6:9-11 should be read. Any church member should know that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). One may be an eloquent and mighty teacher of God's word; but if one's life is dark and shady, how can one stand before God and men??

Brother H. Leo Boles sometimes would say, "How can I hear what you say, when what you are is Forever ringing in my ears"? Paul demanded much of Timothy, a young preacher. He wrote, "Let no man despise" (think down upon or against you) "thy youth; but be thou an example of them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12).

In conclusion, let us purge our lives of sin, of excuses, of worldly pleasures, of evil consciences, of all shades and forms of negligence, that we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28-29; Romans 12:1-2).

These words are written for those who honestly seek for truth.

## *Some Thoughts On Gratitude*

**CHARLES E. MCDONALD**

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:16-18). ". . . Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). These scriptures point us to the need of learning and practicing the virtue of gratitude. Men ought to be diligent about it.

I read of a preacher who had the habit in his opening prayer each Sunday of thanking God for the weather. On a particular dreary, cold, icy, windy Sunday morning, the few people who had ventured out wondered how he could possibly refer to the nasty

weather outside with any note of gratitude. The preacher was, however, equal to the occasion. "Dear God," he prayed, "we thank Thee that Thou doest send us so few days such as today."

How about us? Do we "give thanks always for all things" to the Father through Jesus? As we learn to see the "silver lining" in all things, to be "good-finders," we will grow in the virtue of Gratitude, and will make it a point to "give thanks, in everything."

## ***Not Far From The Kingdom***

**JOE E. GALLOWAY**

After a certain scribe responded discreetly, Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). All responsible people are either in the kingdom of God or outside it. Of those outside the kingdom, many are far from it. It would take much teaching, as well as a big change of attitude and emphasis on the part of these individuals themselves, before they would be able to enter it. Yet there are some, like this scribe, who are "not far" from the kingdom. Perhaps with just a little encouragement from us they would enter the kingdom and be saved.

### **HOW ONE ENTERS THE KINGDOM**

To be in the kingdom is to be in the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18-19). So, it is the same as being in the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), which is equivalent to being in Christ. All these expressions suggest the common idea of being accepted of God, of being saved.

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). Those who did this in Acts 2 were added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:47). This baptism puts one "into Christ" (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), or "into one body" - the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Since the kingdom is the church, the body of Christ, or the saved state, we would conclude that faith and baptism put one into the kingdom.

This conclusion agrees perfectly with Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus on how one enters the kingdom. He said, "Except a

man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Then to explain this new birth further, he said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In a physical birth there is the begetting by the male, but the actual birth itself involves the coming forth from the female. This illustrates the new birth, the spiritual birth. The Spirit does the begetting by means of his seed, the word of God. James 1:18 states, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth . . ." When one is buried in baptism he comes forth from the water to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). So, being "born of water and of the Spirit" is to believe and be baptized. As we have already seen, this puts one into the kingdom of God (John 3:5)

### **THOSE NEAR THE KINGDOM**

Who are those people who are neither "far" from the kingdom, nor yet "in" the kingdom, but are near the kingdom of God? Knowing who they are should help us to further teach and encourage them to enter and be saved.

1. Those who have honest hearts are not far from the kingdom. Regarding the good ground in his parable of the soils, Jesus said, "But that in the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). Those with honest hearts will desire God's truth like a starving man desires food and water. Jesus promised, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). We know that Cornelius was not far from the kingdom, for he obeyed the gospel the very day he learned the truth. Consider his honest, longing attitude toward God's truth as he was about to be taught. He said, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33). Those with such an attitude today are our best prospects for conversion!

2. Usually those who are basically good people are more easily taught. Prior to his conversion, Cornelius was described as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). Of course one may trust in his own

goodness, and so deny his need of God's salvation. Paul wrote of those who went "about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:3).

3. A truly humble man is "not far" from the kingdom. He realizes his unworthiness and is willing to submit to God. In contrast, one who is self-satisfied and who is as good as he wants to be will be difficult to interest in the kingdom. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). Those "poor in spirit" are those who do not think too highly of themselves. In Isaiah 57:15 God said, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This shows the humble man to be the type who can be "revived."

### **"NEAR" IS NOT ENOUGH!**

Someone has said that "horseshoes" is the only game where being near ever counts. We understand that if a football player NEARLY made a touchdown, or a baseball player NEARLY made it to homeplate, HE DID NOT SCORE! What about the car that NEARLY made it across the railroad crossing in time?

Likewise, having been NEAR the kingdom will not count on Judgment Day! Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22,23). These were near the kingdom in many ways, but they had not entered it. Jesus had already said in verse 21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Until one obeys the Lord's will to enter the kingdom, being "near" does not count.

Those "near" the kingdom seldom remain that way long. If they fail to enter, they will gradually lose interest and it will be more and more difficult to gain them. Let us be the proper example and encouragement, now, to those who are "not far" from the kingdom!

# ***Is The Bible Accurate***

**F. FURMAN KEARLEY**

Much of the confusion in our society today is because of the lack of recognition of a standard or an authority in matters of morals and ethics. According to a recent news report, in 1970 fewer than 10 percent of 15-year-old girls had had sex, but in 1999 nearly 40 percent of 15-year olds have had sex. This is occurring despite the fact that more than 25 sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, are spreading like an epidemic. Even if sex outside marriage were not wrong, sensible informed people would avoid promiscuous sex to avoid venereal diseases that cause much suffering and death.

All of us have an ultimate authority that we must recognize, respect and obey. The Creator who made us has also given us a book of instructions that we must obey in our moral and spiritual lives if we are to please Him and be saved. Unfortunately, more and more of God's creatures are ignoring Him, rebelling against Him, and refusing to recognize His authority and follow His orders.

The Bible is God's Book. God's Word, and it contains commands that we must obey and promises that we can receive if we obey.

The Bible is proven to be inspired and authoritative by many evidences. It was scientifically accurate long before modern science discovered many of the things the Bible affirms. Psalm 8:4 mentions the paths of the sea. However, sailors and seamen did not know about these paths until after the Civil War. William Fontain Murry, an admiral in the Navy, observed these, recorded them and mapped them. After this work, the nautical maps contained the paths or streams that are found in the oceans. David, by inspiration, knew about them nearly 3,000 years earlier.

The Bible is supernaturally accurate regarding history. Critics have tried many times to prove errors in the Bible; however, they have never been able to do so. Instead, subsequent history has proved the Bible to be right.

Liberals in the last century alleged that the references in the Bible to the Hittites were in error and that no such nation of people

ever lived. In 1906 Hugo Winckler discovered more than 10,000 tablets written in the Hittite language and detailing much of the history of the Hittite kingdom from about 1500 B.C. to 1100 B.C. He had to decipher the language and then translate it. The tablets told the history of the Hittites and their wars with the Egyptians, Babylonians and others. The Bogazkoy Tablets completely confirmed the Bible as being accurate in its description of the Hittites and the specific things mentioned about them in the Bible.

Likewise, critics charged in the last century that the Bible was in error to mention Belshazzar as king of Babylon. However, archaeological discoveries about the Babylonians and the kings who reigned over them and their connection with Judah have confirmed the Bible. It is now known that Belshazzar was indeed king, serving in place of his father Nabonitus at the time that Babylon fell to the Persians. He was indeed the third in the kingdom.

Archaeology has confirmed more than 70 different personalities and events mentioned in the Bible. At the beginning of this century, most of these were unknown outside the Bible, but now archaeology and history attest to their existence and to the fact that they did the very things mentioned about them in the Bible.

Although critics have alleged many errors and contradictions in the Bible, they have not proved a single one of these to be historically true. The founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary stated many years ago that when he was a young man, many problems about the Bible troubled him. As he continued to study, he found solutions to more and more of them. By the time he was an old man, he said all were settled except three or four, and he was not concerned about these.

All that had concerned him had been due to the ignorance of human beings about the ancient world and its history. Subsequent study of archaeology and history had substantiated the Bible in every point controverted. He felt assured that later evidence would confirm that Bible's accuracy concerning these three or four items.

I believe exactly this way. I do not know of a single charge of error or contradiction that critics make against the Bible that cannot be refuted, and I know of many, many charges they have made against the Bible that have been refuted by archaeology and history. The Bible is by far the world's most accurate history book.

It contains no error that critics have ever been able to prove or substantiate. It contains many facts of history and science that have been confirmed by subsequent history and science. I have explicit trust that the Bible is inspired because of its supernatural accuracy in regard to its references to history, to science, to geography, and to many other matters.

J.W. McGarvey wrote his book *Lands of the Bible* after making trips to the Holy Land. He emphasized strongly that the geographical references in the Bible have been confirmed by historical geography and archaeology.

John W. Haley in his great work *Alleged Contradictions in the Bible* refutes hundreds of false allegations made by critics and proves that the Bible is accurate. Gleason L. Archer in his book *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* does the same thing. Every false charge that has been made against the Bible has been refuted by loyal, faithful defenders of the Bible. The Bible is supernaturally accurate—historically, scientifically, geographically and otherwise.

Fulfilled prophecy certainly proves that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. No one can prophesy what will take place 50 years from now and certainly not 100 or 1,000 years from now. Yet the Bible contains prophecies about the Jews and about the descendants of Jacob and Esau that are clearly fulfilled in the information we have from history today. The Jews still survive as a people more than 2,500 years after they were scattered throughout the world by the Babylonians. Today, those descending from the ancient Jews are to be found in virtually every nation and every great city. On the other hand, the Bible described that Esau's descendants would vanish from history. History certainly substantiates this. The last reference made in history to any descendants of Esau are those descendants of Edom mentioned by Josephus about A.D. 70. How could biblical authors have known the Jews would continue to exist from generation to generation until the end of the world and, at the same time, know that Esau's descendants would cease to exist about A.D. 70?

Hundreds of tribes and ethnic groups have ceased to exist in the history of the world. Many of the barbarian tribes that existed in the last days of Rome and in the early Middle Ages have ceased to exist in Europe and Russia; no descendants are to be found. In

four centuries in the United States, more than 200 different Indian tribes have ceased to exist. The Jews, although small in number in comparison to other ethnic groups, have continued to exist through all of these centuries because God preserved them as a witness or testimony of His power.

Alcuin, a medieval monk, was asked by his emperor what the greatest evidence of the inspiration of the Bible was. He responded quickly, "The Jews." Indeed, the history and the contemporary existence of the Jews prove that God has blessed them as a people and a nation as His Word states. Not only has He blessed them to continue in existence, but He has also cursed them to become a despised and scattered people in the world, as described in Deuteronomy 28. Their persecution and suffering are due to their rejection of Christ as the Messiah. Christ added His words of denunciation concerning the Jews in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 to those denunciations that Moses gave in Deuteronomy 28.

If space permitted, we could cite many, many more specific evidences of the inspired accuracy of the prophecy, history, geography, science, and other matters related to the Bible. The Bible is God's Word, and every bit of it is authoritative. When we study it and rightly divide it and realize that we are living under the new covenant—the New Testament—then we can please God and be saved. We must trust our Bible.

We must study our Bible. We must obey our Bible if we would be saved. We must respect the authority of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the apostles, and we must obey the gospel if we would be saved. We must teach all men and women to believe in and obey the gospel of God's Word and trust in its accuracy.

Just as it is accurate concerning science, history, geography and other matters, it is also accurate concerning the second coming of Christ, the judgment to come, heaven and hell. We must submit to God's will if we would be saved. If we reject it, if we disobey it, we will be cursed and condemned through all eternity and to live eternity in hell. I urge each person to trust in the accuracy, the inspiration, and the authority of God's Word.

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