

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 35

May 2004

No. 1

EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

*“And as it is appointed for men to die once,
but after this the judgment.”*

Pointing to the efficacy of the death of Christ once, for all, at Hebrews 9:27 it says that it is appointed by the Creator of man to die once and then face God in His judgment. Actually, he was making the point that Christ who died the sacrificial death on the cross; for the whole humanity, died once. Because there is only one life on earth for everyone. Christ was born on earth only once. And so is everyone else who is born on earth has only one life to live on earth. There is no re-birth. All are born once, and all will die once. This does not mean, however, that there is no life after death, or one ceases to live after death. After death, Christ was resurrected, after three days, (Matthew 12:40; 28:1-8). He was then taken up and was received in heaven, where He is with God the Father. (Acts 1:1-11). The Bible says, likewise all will be resurrected one day, by the power of God. (1Corinthians 15). Christ taught, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:28, 29). Thus all will be resurrected, as Christ was resurrected, at the same time. Some for the eternal life in heaven, and others for the

everlasting condemnation of hell. (Matthew 25:46).

As sure as people are born and will die once, it is that sure that all people will be raised one day to face God in His judgment. At the close of his message to the Athenians Paul did not forget to tell them: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in His righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained, He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the death." (Acts 17:30, 31). God will surely judge the world on the day of judgment by the Man whom He has ordained to be the judge, and He has given the assurance of this to all by raising Him from the death. Therefore, at 2 Corinthians 5:10, the Bible says. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

God already knows each of us from out and from in. We don't have to tell Him how good or how bad we are. He knows us already. He is our creator. He knows every intent of the thoughts of our hearts. But He wants all men everywhere to repent or to change. He has given us His book, the Bible, to be our guide (Psalm 119:105). He has given us His Son Jesus Christ to be our example in our daily life that we should follow His steps. (1 Peter 2:21). God has given us the choice of choosing our own destiny of eternal life. God has not predestinated any individual for heaven or for hell. Of course, He has predestinated all those who would repent and do His will to come to Him to live with Him eternally in His heaven. But all those who would refuse to repent will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:7-8). In giving His Great Commission to His followers Jesus Christ had told them to: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and His baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15, 16). The gospel is for all. All have the same opportunity, as long as we are on earth, to repent and come back to God.

The Institution Of The Lord's Supper

J.C. CHOATE

Before the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, He instituted His memorial supper. He and the disciples had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, which was observed once a year in memory of the time that the Angel of Death had passed over God's people while they were in Egyptian bondage. Jesus used this occasion to institute His supper, which would become a memorial eaten weekly by His people everywhere in the world, in remembrance of the sacrifice of His body and His blood. The record says, *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"* (Matthew 26:26-29).

Please note that at this point in time the Lord had not yet died on the cross, but He instituted the supper to be observed in remembrance of Him after His death, burial, and resurrection. He also pointed out that He would not partake of it again until that day when He would take it new with them in His Father's kingdom. The kingdom or the church had not yet come into existence, but would do so after His resurrection. From the day of the beginning of the church, on Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, He would be with His people as they partook of it, and as they continue to this day.

On one occasion Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead, This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying,*

How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever "(John 6:48-58).

Throughout the foregoing statement, Jesus was not talking about eating His physical body and drinking His literal blood. Rather, he was talking about spiritual matters, of the bread serving as a reminder of His body, and the cup of His blood. There are some today who believe that when one partakes of the bread, it becomes the physical flesh of Jesus; and when they partake of the cup or fruit of the vine that it changes into the actual blood of Jesus. Of course this is not true. Jesus would not use His Supper to involve His people in cannibalism.

Now that Christ has died on the cross, has been buried, and resurrected from the grave, and the kingdom or the church has been established as He had planned. We who are the Lord's people, members of His church, His family, are to assemble each first day of the week to partake of His Supper. We have an example of Paul and the Christians at Troas meeting for this purpose. The record says, *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight"* (Acts 20:7). Bible scholars recognize that the wording, "breaking bread", had reference to the church partaking of the Lord's Supper in its weekly assembly. You will remember also that when Christ instituted the supper, He said that He would be present with the disciples when they would meet in the future to remember Him. On another occasion He said that where two or three would be gathered in His name, he would be with them (Matthew 18:20).

Please notice also that the assembly of the Christians which Paul attended was on the first day of the week. **Which** first day of

the week? There is a first day in **every** week, and that is how often Christians were to meet to worship and to remember the memorial supper of Christ. Under the Old Testament law God's people were commanded to remember the Sabbath Day, but **which** Sabbath Day? **Every** Sabbath Day. And in like manner, Christians are to worship, partaking of the Supper, each first day of each week.

In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul speaks of how some members of the church were abusing the Lord's Supper. They were turning it into a common meal and this was wrong. Paul told them that they had their own houses for their meals, but that when they came together for worship it was to partake of the bread and cup in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ, and not to eat a meal to fill their stomachs.

Paul went on to say, *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

The Corinthian Christians were reminded, as we should be, that the time of eating the Lord's Supper is also a time of self-examination. If one has not been faithful to God, he needs to repent and ask God's forgiveness. If the sin is public, he needs to go before the church to express repentance, to confess his faults, and to ask his brethren to forgive him. Only the faithful, and those who have repented of their sins and have asked for forgiveness, are in position to partake of the Supper. If one fails to examine and correct himself, he brings dishonor on the Lord's name and stands condemned himself.

Are you a Christian, a member of the church of Christ? If you are, then you should assemble with the Lord's people each first day of the week to worship, partaking of His supper in all seriousness for the purpose of remembering Him and what He did for you that you might be saved. This homage brings honor and glory to the Lord and gives you the strength and encouragement to remain faithful to Him.

How Can we see God?

FRANCIS DAVID

There are lots of people who would like to see God. They want to see Him face to face. They seek all kinds of ways and means to see Him. The Bible says: "God is Spirit (John 4:24). Since God is a Spirit, it means you cannot see Him. But we can see his universe, his power and creativity which show that He is in existence. In Romans Chapter 1, we read as apostle Paul talks, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen." (Verses 18-25). Even after seeing his existence, we still cannot see him. But the question remains the same, how can we see him?

God created man in his own image (Gen. 1:27). Since man

was created in the image of God, he is intellectual being, he can think, he can reason, thus we see, man can meet God in his thoughts. As a person comes in contact with the word of God (Bible), he reads it, and see that God is communicating with him. God and man meet each other in the word the God's book. When we read the word of God, our mind will take us to the point where we will think what to do, whether to believe in God or to just reject it. in Gen. 3rd chapter we read about Eve, that in the Garden of Eden she did not put her thoughts on God's will and rejected his word because she wanted to please herself. Apostle Paul has a wrong thinking when he was persecuting the early church (Acts 26:9). He thought within himself that he is doing the right thing, whereas he was wrong. We must make our thinking right, if we want to meet God. Paul says, we must renew our minds (Rom. 12:1,2). In order to meet God or to see him you must meditate on his word (Ps. 119:94-97).

How can we see God in his word? It will not happen by accident. We must be serious about it. Just take some time to read and study the Bible and meditate on it and you will feel in your thoughts that you are meeting or seeing God. Just ask yourself, what God is telling me and what should I do with God's word and God's commands, should I obey him?

We must respect God's word, and must pray to God for wisdom if we want to see Him in His word (James 1:5). You might be seeking God or you want to see him in some religious place of worship. The Bible says, that he does not dwell in temples. We read in Acts chapter 7 from verses 46 to 50, "Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as said the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will you build me? Said the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" Apostle Paul writes to the Christians that they must meditate on these things, and there is no doubt if they really do this they will see God. He writes by saying, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;

if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on these things. (Phil. 4:8,9). If you want to see God think on these what Paul has mentioned here.

Christianity—A Joyful Walk with God! (Part 1)

THOMAS R DOHLING

"Shout for joy to Yahweh, all you lands!

Serve Yahweh with gladness. Come before his presence with singing.

Know that Yahweh, he is God. It is he who has made us, and we are his.

We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, Into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, and bless his name.

For Yahweh is good. His loving kindness endures forever, His faithfulness to all generations" [Psalms 100].

Many doubts and fears assail us as we live the Christian life because we live in a world which is flesh oriented and life for the Christian can be harsh and hard and difficult. But thanks be to God, our Shepherd [our everything] Who brings us to a place where we learn to trust Him. He teaches us many things as we walk with Him and talk to Him and seek His will, daily. The key is **TRUSTING GOD**. Carefully consider the following:

"Thus says Yahweh: Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from Yahweh. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited" (Jeremiah 17:5-6)

"Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, and whose trust Yahweh is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters,

who spreads out its roots by the river, and **shall not fear when heat comes**, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

See the contrast! How cursed is the man who trusts in man (including in himself) and departs from God! How barren and empty his life is! How blessed is the man who trusts in God! How full to overflowing!

When we trust God, we tell Him EVERYTHING [we even share our weaknesses with Him—the bad things about ourselves—bad thoughts, lusts, fears, desires, etc.] and look to Him to work things out in our lives. HE is EAGER to do so and He will because He is faithful and also because He is Love! Consider how He has loved us in that "He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" [John 3:16]. He wants to save us so that we may have an abundant (spiritual) life that is of better quality than the life in the flesh.

Christianity is "walking with God, in the Lord Jesus Christ." Thereby *we know God from experience!* This is much more exciting, thrilling and fulfilling than knowing about Him. As someone has said: "The Bible is evidence about God. We need to be rooted and grounded in love and God IS love" [1 John 4:8b]. In other words, we need to have our foundation in Jesus, Who IS God and the expression of His Love!

Is It The Real Thing?

DAVID THURMAN

Not long ago a large group calling themselves Heaven's Gate committed mass suicide in order to join a spaceship trailing behind the Hale-Bopp comet. As dozens of bodies were discovered, the public was shocked and outraged. Magazine articles and television shows explored and examined the cult. Jokes were made by every comedian.

Many took another look at all religions. When cultists do

foolish tilings in the name of their particular doctrines, some people put all believers in the same category. As a result, Christianity and faith get criticized along with the cult.

However, the Bible does offer evidence that will demonstrate to any honest person the difference between a foolish cult and the real thing. When Jesus lived on the earth, He lived a genuine and powerful life. He was not some one offering "pie in the sky" hopes. By looking at His life and teachings we can learn the difference between real faith and fake religion.

DO PEOPLE BENEFIT FROM THE FAITH?

A simple distinction between fake and genuine religion is the question of benefit. When Jesus taught and ministered, people's lives always improved. Peter's mother-in-law was healed (Mark 1:30-31). A leper was healed (Mark 1:40-45). Sinners were restored, such as Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10) and Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2) who had demons cast out of her. Everywhere Jesus went He left people whose lives were better.

This grew out of Jesus' love for people. Even when He wanted to get away to be alone, His concern for people caused Him to act in their behalf. *"And He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile.' (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. And the people saw them going and many recognized them, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. And disembarking, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things"* (Mark 6:31-34). Jesus tried to get away from the crowd, but His compassion made Him take time to teach. Even though they were making it impossible to even stop for dinner, Jesus loved people too much to not help them. The rest of the story describes the feeding of the 5,000, in which that whole crowd ate from a few loaves and fishes, again, the result of being with Jesus.

Anytime you come in contact with a religion or faith, watch and see if people's lives are improved by that faith. In genuine Christianity, people are not hurt nor killed, nor do they take their

lives. Instead, their lives are improved, empowered and made better. That is what Jesus did. That is what His genuine followers will do.

ARE RELATIONSHIPS BUILT BY THE FAITH?

A second characteristic of Jesus was His teaching on getting along with others. Jesus never asked people to abandon their relationships with others. Instead, He encouraged people to do all that could be done to heal relationships. *"If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, then come and present your offering"* (Matt. 5:23-24). Jesus wanted people to realize that they couldn't be close to God without first learning how to treat others right. A faith that encourages people to mistreat people or abandon relationships is not a genuine faith.

Look how many times Jesus taught people to get along. We are to love and pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:43-44). We are to forgive those who sin against us (Matt. 6:13-14). We are not to judge or criticize others (Matt. 7:1-5).

It is true that Jesus warned there would be suffering in families because people choose to follow Him. *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household"* (Matt. 10:34-36). Jesus warned that following Him would be costly, perhaps even costing broken family relationships. Jesus experienced this Himself, as even His own family members didn't believe in Him (John 7:5). Jesus knew that if you stood up for God and right sometimes people would reject you and your stand.

But, unlike cults, Jesus didn't demand that people abandon their homes and families. If there was distance from a family, always it was the family or family members who caused the distance, not the believer. Jesus didn't keep away from his brothers, even though they rejected Him and His message. In other words, true believers heal relationships, using the teachings of Jesus. Others often reject that teaching, which forces the believer

to choose between faith and family. But that always comes from the non-believer, not the Christian. In fact, spouses are told to stay with their non-believing partners if at all possible (1 Cor. 7:10-13) and wives married to non-believing husbands should live Christlike lives in front of their spouses (1 Pet. 3:1-2). Religious groups that require you to be cut off from friends and family are not the real thing.

IS GOD'S ENTIRE WORD USED?

Jesus was familiar with efforts to edit God's word and apply it in self serving ways. Satan tempted Jesus using scripture and Jesus replied using more scripture (Matt. 4:6-7). The Pharisees and Saducees used various passages and logic to defend their conclusions. Sometimes they were right, many times they were wrong. They could see the rules of the law, but failed to grasp its purpose, which was to help people. So, when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, all His enemies could see was a man 'working' on the Sabbath. They could not see the good that was done or the suffering that had been relieved. (Mark 3:1-6). Jesus believed and trusted in God's word, but He used and trusted all of it, not just the parts that suited His life or purposes.

Cults often use only those scriptures that support their peculiar thinking. This is the source of all human creeds, when people attempt to refine God's word so it will say more clearly what they want it to say. This was the mistake of the Sadducees when they tried to trick Jesus concerning the resurrection. Jesus' response speaks volumes concerning cults today. *"You are mistaken, not understanding the scriptures, or the power of God"* (Matt. 22:29).

I can recall meeting with two men from a cult. They picked and chose their verses carefully, ignoring or rejecting any verses that did not comply with their views. In fact, they got angry when I tried to read the entire chapter from which they had chosen one verse. They claimed I couldn't understand it without their help!

DOES THE FAITH ENCOURAGE PERSONAL BELIEF?

This last point typically underscores a fundamental quality of most cults and is quite different from how Jesus lived. Cults usually claim to have the truth and only they can understand it. If you want

to really know about God, or spacecrafts following comets, or whatever, you must use their thinking, their books, their sources.

Jesus merely turned people back to God. When a man asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus responded with, *"What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"* (Luke 10:26). It looks as if Jesus' first response was always to turn people to God's word, trusting that they could read and understand it for themselves. If they persisted, as this man did in Luke 10, Jesus would go further, often telling a parable. When using parables Jesus said *"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken from him"* (Matt. 13:11-12). Jesus says that the ability to understand is based on what is in a man's heart, that is, on his openness to the message and his desire to know. People with hard, closed hearts will never get the messages in the parables of the teaching of Jesus. Not because some special person with special insight hasn't explained it, but because they are not ready to hear and learn. Those ready to hear and learn will hear the message. That is why the common people flocked to Jesus. They could hear and understand His teaching.

Any group that denies you can read and understand the Bible for yourself is not a genuine religion. If someone in that group has written "inspired" explanations of the Bible, then they are denying the message and mission of Jesus. They are not the real thing.

DOES THE FAITH FORGIVE AND RESTORE?

Perhaps the one great quality that set Jesus apart was His willingness to forgive people. Zaccheus was a tax collector. He was ostracized by his community, not allowed to enter the synagogue. Jesus went to his house to eat (Luke 19:1-10). A woman came to a well and Jesus taught her, even though she was a Samaritan who had been divorced and remarried many times (John 4). Did Jesus condone theft in tax collecting? Not at all. Did the Master condone multiple marriages and divorce? Not at all. But He did love sinners of all kinds and He was willing to spend time with and associate with them.

What about your religion? Does it encourage you to go to sinners? Not to condone any sin, but to demonstrate love to the sinner. Many cults compel their members to disassociate from any people with which they disagree. Jesus was not like that, and neither will His followers be like that.

Jesus came to forgive the world and to restore it to relationship with God. This message of reconciliation is our message as well. Come to God today. Access the blood of Jesus through faith, repentance and immersion in His name. Be reconciled to God, today!

Why People Fail to Accept Christ

CLEM THURMAN

The book of Acts is often called, "The Book of Conversions." But, although there are many conversions recorded there, there are also some sad instances of people not being converted. Felix and Agrippa are two examples. When the apostle Paul preached to Felix, *"As he reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me"* (Acts 24:25). No "convenient season" ever came for Felix, and he remained unconverted.

Paul was still in prison when he was brought before King Agrippa. Asked to make his defense, Paul simply recounted the story of his own conversion to Jesus Christ. When he had finished, he said to King Agrippa, a Jew: *"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest"* (Acts 26:27). Agrippa replied, *"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"* (v. 28). Paul's answer to that was classic: *"I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except for these bonds"* (v. 29). Like Felix, he was stirred by the message, but would not act in response to that message.

We are not told all the reasons why Felix and Agrippa failed

to obey the Lord. But there are some rather obvious reasons why many people fail to become Christians today. Some of those reasons, or excuses, are so common that are exceedingly dangerous, and it behooves to study them.

THEY FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THEY ARE SINNERS

Man is nearly always slow to recognize his own guilt. Adam, instead of admitting His sin to God, said, "*The woman you gave me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*" (Gen. 3:12). Many people today don't think they are sinners because they are living "good moral lives." They haven't committed murder or adultery, they are not thieves nor liars. But they forget that there are other kinds of sin: evil speaking, lust, refusal to honor God in worship as God directs, etc. Cornelius was a good, moral man - but he was still lost: "*A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always*" (Acts 10:2). But the Lord told him to send for Peter, "*Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shall be saved*" (Acts 11:14). In spite of his morality, he was still a sinner in need of the Savior.

The truth is that all of us are sinners. "*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. . . There is none righteous, No, not one . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:10,23). John writes on this theme, also: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*" (1 John 1:8,10).

It is difficult to face up to our sins. When David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, then had her husband killed, the prophet of God made him face what he had done. David was big enough, and courageous enough, to face his sin. His response, without further coercion was straightforward and simple: "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2 Sam. 12:13). It was this attitude, this willingness to face his sin and immediately and sincerely repent, that caused David to be, "*A man after God's own heart*" (Acts 13:22).

Even for those of us who have not sinned in the same way

that King David did, we are still sinners: "For all have sinned . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves" (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8). And the fact that we are sinners means that we need the salvation that only Jesus Christ can offer: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The apostles declared the same thing, "In none other is there salvation" (Acts 4:12).

THEY FAIL TO REALIZE THE EFFECT OF SIN

Most people, when confronted by their sins, try to shift the blame by saying, "Everybody has sinned." And that is true. But it still is no excuse for my sins, nor yours! Because of the sins of Adam and Eve, they were driven out from the presence of God (Gen. 3). The prophet explains why, "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). Most people assume that, regardless of what they have done, when they call upon God, He will hear them. Isaiah says that is not the case: "Your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

Solomon, writing about the effect sin has on our relationship with God, wrote this: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh . . . Then shall they call upon me, and I will not answer" (Prov. 1:24-28). To allow sin to separate us from the fellowship of God, so that He will not hear our prayers, is a deadly serious thing. It doesn't matter that, "Everybody is doing it," if our doing it is going to separate us from God! But so many people look around at other sinners, and reason, "I am as good as they are." And they may be right in that. But in the judgment that will be poor consolation!

The apostle John wrote, "The witness is this, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). As noted above, "In none other is there salvation" (Acts 4:12). If we would be in fellowship with God, we must be in Christ. That means being cleansed from our sins by His blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; Heb.

9:22). As the apostle Peter wrote, *"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The apostle Paul echoed the same thought as Peter wrote, when he declared in Rom. 5:8-9, *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him."* Only when people realize the effect of sin can they appreciate the great cost of their salvation!

THEY ARE CONFUSED BY THE MANY CHURCHES

Many say, "There are so many churches, how can I know which one is right? Or, are they all right?" Jesus promised, *"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18). Friend, in all honesty, the Lord never authorized another church to be built! In fact, he prayed that there would never be any others, but that all would be one in His church: *"Neither for these [apostles] only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me"* (John 17:20-21). He prayed for unity, not division. He purchased the church, *"with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28), and He is *"the head of the body, the church"* (Col. 1:18).

After exhorting all to *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Eph. 4:3), the apostle Paul goes on to explain why: *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"* (Eph. 4:4-6). Please notice that there is *"one body"* and *"one faith"* in exactly the same way there is *"one Lord"* and *"one God."* Denominations offer a "choice" of churches (bodies), but God doesn't. Religion in general offers a choice of "gods," but the True God doesn't! There is *"one"* of each of those seven things named.

When division occurred in the church at Corinth, it was much like denominationalism today. Believers divided into groups, which

were denominated in a way to set them apart from other believers. Listen to what God told them: "*Let there be no divisions among you . . . Is Christ divided?*" (1 Cor. 1:10,13). That kind of division was wrong then, it is wrong now. The Lord built His church, which He purchased with His own blood, and He prayed that all in it would be "*one.*" We need to live in such a way as to help that prayer be answered.

THEY SEE NO NEED TO "CHANGE CHURCHES"

Some folk, when shown what the Bible teaches about the Lord's church, reply something like: "I don't want to change churches." But we must recognize that it isn't simply a matter of "changing churches." It is a matter of following truth! Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). We must be willing to follow the truth the Son of God revealed, wherever it may lead us!

Look at the Jews in Jerusalem when the gospel was first publicly preached. Peter declared, "*God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:36-38). They didn't quibble, they responded: "*They then that received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls*" (v. 41). To what were they added? "*The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved*" (Acts 2:47).

As you go on through the book of Acts, you will read of dozens of conversions. "*Believers were the more added to the Lord . . . When they believed, they were baptized . . . And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. . . Now, why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on his name*" (Acts 5:14; 8:12; 10:48; 22:16). The gospel is "*the power of God unto salvation . . . to the Jew first and also to the Greek*" (Rom. 1:16). When that gospel "was preached, both Jews and Gentiles had the same problem. To be made free from their sins and be brought into fellowship with God, they had to leave

the religion in which they had been reared and unite with Christ in baptism. Beloved, the principle hasn't changed. We are not just talking about "changing churches." We are talking about changing lives!

The apostle Paul shows that *"all spiritual blessings" are "in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). He further shows how we reach those blessings and become children of God: *"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus did put on Christ... And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise"* (Gal. 3:26-29). So it isn't about changing churches. It is about leaving our former lives, and living for Christ and *"in Christ."*

Many folk deceive themselves with the thought, "I have lots of time, yet." But the truth is, we just don't know how much time we have, if any. *"Behold, now is the acceptable time; Behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). Go back and read through, completely, the book of Acts. Note what people were told to do. Then note this: without exception, every one who became a Christian, did so when they first heard the gospel of Christ! They didn't put it off and do it next week, nor next month, nor next year. They did it **NOW**. That is the only sensible course. I pray that you will do that.

Satan's Hall of Fame

JOHNEY RAMSEY

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has often been called God's hall of fame of faithful people. *"By faith Abel... By faith Enoch ...By faith Noah ...by faith Abraham"* and Joseph, Moses, Joshua and many more (Heb. 11:4-26). These lead out in a marvelous array of those *"of whom the world was not worthy"* (Heb. 11:38). These valiant heroes truly warm our hearts.

However, Satan also has a "hall of infamy" that should cause us to cringe and then reflect upon such a motley crew of shallow and pathetic enemies of truth and virtue. What a contrast between the spiritual nobility of those who faithfully served the Lord and the wicked ambassadors of hell!

Three of those evil ones step into the dubious spotlight on the stage of history, representing envy, greed and egotism: *"Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah"* (Jude 11). This combination is deadly and pervasive in our own society and, sadly, sometimes found within the body of Christ. Life is not a problem to be solved, but a gift to be enjoyed. Some folk, however, create problems that are difficult to resolve.

Others high on Satan's list of infamy would be Jezebel, Jeroboam and Herod. These represent the devil's nefarious schemes in the realm of immorality, false worship and cowardice. Jezebel is synonymous with idolatry and dislike for truth. Thousands today must be related to her! Jeroboam, *"who made Israel to sin"* made it popular and easy to contravene the true worship and allegiance to God! Rebellion and change were the order of his emphasis much like those today who clamor for new things and change in men's whims replacing divine mandates. In 1 Kgs. 12:28, he declared that Israel had obeyed God long enough! Herod is a leader in carnal desires overwhelming moral purity due to a lack of backbone (Matt. 14:9). Compromise in moral standards is common-place in our own day. Jesus said, *"No man can serve two masters... Seek ye first the kingdom of God"* (Matt. 6:24,33). Someone has properly stated this maxim, "If you remove the rocks, the brook would lose its song."

Other stalwarts of sin were Pilate, Felix and Elymas. They stand on centre stage in the theater of sorrow and sin. They resented the power and beauty of truth and blocked others access to the glorious light of godliness, integrity and stability in the spiritual realm. So many people today are just like them (Acts 13:8; 24:24-25). When vain men attempt to guide themselves, only ruin awaits them: *"The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23). The following admonition should help us avoid self-centered living: *"And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you"* (Judg. 8:23).

In our own generation, the devil has a great host of helpers that will send millions to eternal hell: ungodly parents, false teachers, rebellious youth, fence straddlers, procrastinators, immoral friends. These will be eternal misfits devoid of heaven

because they sought elusive joys on earth! From the Garden of Eden until now, such folk have searched in vain for peace and happiness, only to realize they had walked the wrong path. A wise person wrote these words:

If you want to feel rich, just count

All the things money can't buy.

The admonition is still true today: *"Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the-devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7). The task is not easy, because the devil is tenacious and clever, but God comforts us, *"Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). Someone wrote a list of Satan's "beatitudes" that ought to cause us to cherish the ones the Lord gave in Matt. 5. The devil's list:

The arrogant

Impure hearts

Trouble-makers

Those who laugh at sin

Do not care for truth

The rebellious

The compromisers.

Following such shallow concepts as that list of Satan's will lead people to become the pallid tasteless-ness of the world and darkness of earth, rather than salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). The tragedy of all of this is the solemn reality that Satan has far more followers than Jesus (Matt. 7:13-14). The inspired writer challenges us: *"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"* (Jude 21).

An Analogy Of The Godhead

CHARLES WHITE

In ancient Israel, the words of *shema* were recited twice daily; "The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deuteronomy 6:4.) And so Israel thought of God as one, although they certainly knew about the plural uses of Elohim in Genesis and other places in the Bible. In

Genesis 1:1,2, the Bible starts out by declaring the plural nature of our God with the words, "In the beginning God..." The Hebrew word translated "God" is Elohim, and is plural. Then in verse 2, Moses continues the record of the creative activity of God with the words, "...and the Spirit of God..." In the first two verses of the Bible we have God telling us a profound truth about Himself, yet this truth has totally perplexed Bible students and scholars alike for centuries. In these verses God declares Himself to be multiple in form and then introduces us to one of those forms, "...the Spirit...." The multiple form of God is again implied in Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image....'" The two personal pronouns refer to multiple persons, thus God is referring to multiple forms in the Godhead.

What form God is really in we have no way of knowing, nor is it important; it is totally moot. What is important is how God has chosen to reveal Himself, and that is in a plural form. Maybe He did this to facilitate man's understanding Him, since man is the limiting entity and not God. We know God by the self-revelation that He has given us. Idle speculations as to what His real form might be only invite men to postulate various forms and images of God that may be, and probably are, quite foreign to His real Self. One thing for sure; we are not capable in this earthly tabernacle to comprehend His Majesty, so let us be content with comprehending His revelation of Himself to us as best we can.

But when questioned about God's plural form, by some, who claim Christians are polytheistic, we find it difficult to explain that although God is one, which we totally accept, that He still is multiple in persons, beings, entities, whatever the form of the Godhead. When we say God is one we mean by it, "a unity."

To answer the question, I use a very simple illustration that comes out of my many years as an engineer and structural analyst using computers to analyze structures for the loads imposed on them during their service life. I have used this illustration in my own teaching, both in the U.S. and in foreign schools where I have taught and it is usually well understood even by the poorly educated. These computer analysis, using the finite element method, have been performed on space structures, jet aircraft engine and commercial turbine engine components and other equipment used in

the mostly military arena. The analogy comes from the computer resources that I have used over the years.

In many large companies, an area, or even a separate building, is reserved for just the large mainframe computers. There are usually several of them hooked together to form a "cluster" of computers, all performing different functions, but called by users, "The computer." For our analogy, let us assume that our computer is composed of three large mainframes that are hooked together in a cluster. In the centre of these computers, assuming they are arranged in a triangular arrangement, sits a printer. Lets assign to computer A the task of doing the I/O, that is, the input/output. This computer takes input from users, translates it into machine language and assigns it to the other computers as needed to complete the task. This computer also serves to digest the output from the other two computers, translates it back into a user readable language and formats it so that it can be output to the user in a form he can understand.

Let us then say that computer B handles all the logical operations; that is, the If-Then's, Go To's, And's, Nan's, Or's, Nor's etc. Then let us say that computer C handles all the mathematical operations, that is, add, subtract, multiply, divide, exponentials, roots, etc. After the task is completed, the printer in the centre of the cluster will print out the results.

Now, what one would not see in our cluster of computers we call "The computer," is the hundreds of miles of wire under the floor that connect the three computers together. This is why computer rooms are specially designed; so they can accommodate all the wiring with a space under the floor. This space can be as deep as required, but in my experience were generally about two feet deep. For the faster, more powerful super-computers, the actual processor chips and wiring interconnecting them may be submerged in a super-cooled environment, such as liquid nitrogen, so as to reduce the electrical resistance in the copper wires. The closer the temperature of the wires approach absolute zero, -459.6 degrees F, the closer the resistance gets to zero, greatly enhancing computer speed and reducing power consumption. This labyrinth of wires under the floor connects the three computers together so that they operate as one, in complete unity and harmony, as long

as the wires are properly connected. That is done when the computer installation is done. The maze of wires under the floor that link the three computers allows them to work as a seamless entity. This is how I think of the Godhead; the three being so intimately connected together that they work as a seamless entity. We might think of this wiring under the floor as that part of the Godhead that has not been revealed because mortal man could not understand it.

If then a user inputs data to "The computer," the I/O computer receives it, translates it, and assigns it proper locations and identifying codes, and sends the data to computers B and C, depending upon the task at hand. All three computers work together on the same input, performing operations as necessary and relaying data back and forth between all three mainframes at the speed of light. The speeds involved in handling the huge amounts of input and output data are dizzying. But the computers handle their respective pieces of it in total unity. Once the task is completed, the results are sent to the printer, or an electronic output file, for the user to access.

So it is with our God. We won't attempt to define which person of the Godhead a particular computer might represent, that would be pushing the illustration beyond its intended limits. We don't want to "allegorize" it. But the point is to show that the three persons of the Godhead act in such close "association," or "cluster," that they indeed are one, and truly Moses could say of our God, that ". . . our Lord is one Lord," for He is. But the key to really understanding this analogy is the printer. There are not three printers giving three different outputs, nor is there one printer giving three outputs. There is one printer and it only gives one output, and that output is God's will for man.

□ □ □