

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 50

April 2020

No. 12

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Should Infants Be Baptized?

FOR MANY YEARS PEOPLE have been taught that their babies must be baptized. The doctrine of infant baptism grew out of a belief that should a child die without having been baptized he/she will suffer eternal punishment in hell with the devil and his angels. It is supposed that souls share in Adam's guilt and every person therefore is under condemnation and is punishable for the inherited guilt quite apart from any actual sins one may commit. Hence it is called "the doctrine of original sin" which teaches that children are born with the guilt of sin through inheritance and are depraved in nature.

But this is not what the Bible teaches. Had it been so that children are born in sin depraved, Christ would not have said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3). Again, in another instance, when little children were being brought to Him so that He might put His hands on them and pray, His disciples rebuked those who were bringing their children to Him. But Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14). Now, if those children were depraved sinners, as it is supposed, then why did Christ say, "of such is the kingdom of heaven"? And why did He tell the disciples to become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven?



The truth of the matter is that babies, little children, have no sin in them. They are as pure as Adam and Eve were in the beginning when God had created them after His own likeness and in His own image. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Adam and Eve were not created by God as little babies, but as full grown man and woman. They were intelligent, rational, were able to differentiate between wrong and right, and were able to choose to do or not to do a certain thing. However, they chose to disobey God's command, and therefore they became sinners when they did that what God had commanded them not to do. (Genesis 2:16, 17 3: 1-13). This is how sin is defined in the Bible. It says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4). Adam and Eve had disobeyed the law or the command of God and had thus become sinners. Likewise, when a baby is born, that baby is without sin. He does not have the capability to understand right from wrong or the full consequences of disobedience. True, at an early age a child can begin to understand obedience to parental commands, but the concept of God and of obedience to Him, and the laws concerning sin and its consequences are beyond the mental capability of a little child. However, when the baby grows and become of a mature age – when he/she is able to know right from wrong; is able to make personal decisions; is able to choose to obey God or to disobey Him; when he/she is accountable to God—from that point onward, God holds that person responsible for every action the individual does.

Some turn to Romans 3:23 to teach that all are born with the sin of Adam. But it does not say that. It reads, "All **have** sinned." Not, "All are born with sin." Others go to Psalm 51:5 to justify the erroneous belief that babies are born sinners. But, again, this is not what is being taught in that passage. Notice what King David said in that passage. He said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity." David was brought forth. But who had brought him forth? His mother! So he was talking there about his mother who had brought him forth and who was in iniquity when she had brought him forth. Again, notice, next he says in that passage, "And in sin my mother conceived me." Who had conceived David? His mother! So who was in sin? His mother! David was not yet even born! This statement is parallel to someone saying, "In anger my mother beat me." Now who was angry? The mother, not the child! David is certainly bemoaning the fact that as an adult he was a sinner. He says one reason he committed sin was the sinful influence, into which he was born. He does not say he was born a sinner, but he was brought

forth in iniquity. He does not say he was conceived a sinner, but was conceived during the time his mother was in sin. In other words, the people who were around him after he was born tempted and influenced him to sin. David's situation was like Adam and Eve's when they were created. They were created sinless, but it was through the persuasion of the devil they chose to sin. So it is with every individual. One is born innocent into the world, but it is a world made up of sinners. It is a world of sinners persuading others to sin. Yet, "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14-15). Sin is committed personally by every individual and not inherited from another. So does the Bible teach at Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

To be saved from sin, the Bible teaches, all need to be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins, after believing in Christ, and repenting of sins, and confessing Christ as the Son of God. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-39). But the fact of the matter is that a baby or child is not a sinner, and therefore that baby or child does not need baptism.

BACK TO THE BIBLE

J.C. Choate



THE RELIGIOUS WORLD IS where it is because God's word has been pushed aside and replaced with the doctrines and commandments of men. But it is a sad day indeed when an individual will bow to man before he will listen to the God of heaven. This should make all quiver and cry out in one voice: "God, forgive us for we know not what we do."

Man as a whole needs to return to the Bible for a "thus saith the Lord." Paul tells us why this should be done, when he says: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness : That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim.3:16,17). If the scripture completely furnishes man

unto all good works, why should anyone want to leave it for something new? The answer must be that such a soul does not have the love for the truth that he should have.

The church of Christ recognizes the Bible as being the complete source book for those things pertaining to spiritual matters. Consequently, this church endeavours to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent, doing Bible things in Bible ways. On this basis we plead with the religious people around about us to return to the Bible for everything that is said or done in the name of Christ. As long as one stays with the Bible he cannot go wrong, but when he departs from it his troubles begin to pile up.

If we believe the Bible like we say we do, then it's back to the Bible for the truth about the church. Christ says: "And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18). He promised to build his church and he kept that promise according to Acts 2. Now, are we members of that church?

Since the Bible is man's complete guide, then it is back to the Bible for the true gospel. You know, there are many perverted gospels being preached but upon turning to the scripture we learn that there is but one gospel which will save, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul says of it, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek", (Rom. 1:16). To believe and obey the gospel one must repent of sins, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Mk.16:16; Acts 2:38). Have you obeyed this gospel?

The Bible being the book of God, then it's back to the Bible for true worship. We often hear that one may worship as he pleases just so long as he is honest and sincere, but this theory has no foundation as far as the scripture is concerned. Christ tells us: "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). True worship demands that the Christian assemble each first day of the week to pray, study, sing, partake of the Lord's Supper, and give. (Lk. 18: 1,2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:16; Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2). In light of the truth, do we worship God in an acceptable way?

If we are going to obey God, it's back to the Bible for the truth about the Christian life. The inspired word nowhere says that if one is once saved he is always saved, but on the other hand, it tells us that if we are Christians we must remain faithful to the Lord in order to eventually and eternally be saved. We read: "Be thou faithful

unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10). To be a true Christian one must put the Lord first in all that he does, following him every day of his life. In view of this can we say that we are New Testament Christians?

Yes, it’s back to the Bible for the things which have been mentioned; but not only so, if we sincerely believe God’s word, it’s back to the Bible for the name (1 Pet. 4 .16), for the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), for the head of the church (Eph. 5:23), for saving faith (Eph. 4:5), for true baptism (Col. 2:12), for the way (John 14:6), and for everything that pertains to truth and righteousness. (John 8:32; Tit. 2:11,12).

“*CALL HIS NAME EMMANUEL*”

Lewis G. Hale

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD told Joseph, “*A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*” (Matthew 1:23).

Big Bang?

In science it has long been accepted that “nothing comes from nothing.” Yet, today many scientists have accepted the “Big Bang” theory. It assumes that there was once nothing, just a huge vacuum. Then there was a great explosion, and all existing matter came into being. Over a period of time it began to take form and design, even intelligence. All this from nothing! Yet, we are considered to be unintelligent to think that at one time there was nothing but an Almighty God, who in love and wisdom created all things.

God Is Revealed

This God revealed Himself to His creation. It is reasonable that a Creator would let His creation know what is expected of him, how to live, how to please the Creator. At first, all revelation was spoken. In the days of Moses, it began to be written down. This continued through the works of the prophets and the New Testament writers. This revelation we call the Bible.

Revealed Through His Son

In God’s good time, He sent His Son to earth to become a man, to live and die as a human being. This Son is a revelation of God. Jesus said that the one who has seen Him has seen the Father. This Jesus was called “Emmanuel” because He was “*God with us*”

(Matthew 1:23). He now reigns at the right hand of God. But, strangely enough, He also dwells in the heart of every Christian.

Korah's Rebellion

Jeril (Polly) Cline

MOSES' FATHER, AMRAM, AND KORAH'S father, Izhar, were brothers (Exodus 6:18-21). That made Korah and Moses first cousins. Their grandfather, Kohath, was a son of Levi.

From the day that God struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, He sanctified to Himself all the first-born in Israel. But, in substitution for the actual first-born sons of Israel, God had chosen the tribe of the Levites to stand before Him. The Levites belonged to God. *"They shall be Mine; I am the Lord"* (Numbers 3:12,13).

The tribe of Levi had been brought near and set before Aaron, the priest, that they might serve him and perform the duties for him as well as for the whole congregation before the tabernacle, to do the service of the tent of meeting (Numbers 3:6,7).

The Levites were appointed over the tabernacle of the testimony. They were over all its furnishings and over all that belonged to it. They were the ones who set it up and took it down. They camped around it that there might be no wrath on the congregation of Israel, for no "layman" was to come near it (Numbers 1:50-53).

Because Moses and Korah were Kohathites, they shared the same camp ground, the south side of the tabernacle (Numbers 3:29).

Korah was responsible for some of the most holy work. The duties of the Kohathites involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary (Numbers 3:17,19,27-32).

But to Moses and Aaron and his sons was granted the responsibility to perform the duties of the sanctuary (Numbers 3:38). They, and they alone, could touch the holy things. It was only after they finished covering the holy furnishings of the sanctuary that the sons of Kohath (Korah among them) could come to carry them to their new location (Numbers 4:15).

Though God had honored the Levites, Korah included, and had given them a work to do to His glory, it was not enough (Numbers 16:9). Not for Korah and two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown.

Hear his words of rebellion. Ask yourself if they sound familiar.

From women who desire a different role, to men who refuse elders' authority . . . from those who want to "showcase" their talent, to those who have a more "progressive" idea:

"You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers 16:3).

The meekest man on earth fell to the ground and appealed to God. *"The Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself, even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself* (Numbers 16:5).

The only appeal we can ever make is to the Lord. He, and He alone, knows what He wants and what is pleasing to Himself. It is only those who are willing to do it *His way* that He can bring near to Himself, for it is *His* will that draws us near to Him. Without that will, we drift away—farther and farther from what is *pleasing to Him*—into the storm-tossed sea of what is *pleasing to us*.

It is ironic that chapter 15 of Numbers closes with instructions concerning the tassels on the corners of the garments of the sons of Israel. They were to be a reminder of all the commandments of the Lord, *"so as to do them and not follow after **your own heart** and **your own eyes**..."* (verse 39).

To ignore what God desires because we desire something else is to blaspheme (wipe our feet off on) His Most Holy Name, the very opposite of what we profess to desire.

Is it any wonder that God still recalls Korah's rebellion in Jude 11?

Korah had great influence. Some of the finest leaders in God's camp stood with him against Moses, and they swayed the people of God to stand with them against Moses in the very doorway of the tabernacle (Numbers 16:19).

Though it may be that only one or two stand with God, He is not swayed from His will.

Korah and the other two leaders, Dathan and Abiram, died before the Lord. However, their sons did not die (Numbers 26:11). And fire came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men of renown (Numbers 16:31-35).

Because the people wrongly blamed Moses and Aaron for the death of those "good men" (verse 41), God desired to kill the whole congregation! As it was, only 14,700 died, besides those who died on account of Korah (verse 49). (This congregation was many times larger than our largest congregations of today. Size never justifies actions.)

How is it where you are? The Lord knows those who are His. They are the ones He is able to bring near to Himself because they follow His will.

What Does The Bible Say About The Creation?

Don L. Norwood

OUR GOD WHO CREATED the universe is an eternal being; He has existed always and is all-powerful. The Psalmist was inspired to write, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God"* (Psalm 90:2). *"Of old You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands"* (Psalm 102:25). Therefore, the Bible begins with these words, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). God the Word actually was the agent of the creation (John 1:1-4,14; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 33:6-9).

The Lord created heaven and earth (universe) in six days and rested on the seventh day (Exodus 31:17). These were ordinary days just as the days are now, as is shown clearly in a comparison of 2 Peter 3:3,4 with Genesis 8:22. Consider also the fact that the Hebrew **word** "yom" (translated "day" in the English language) is a regular daylight day as we know it. Then study Genesis 1:5 very carefully. The lighted portion of morning and evening was called day. The darkened hours were called night (see Psalm 74:16).

On day one of the creation, light was brought into being. The Lord separated the light from darkness.

On day two He created the firmament (open expanse of sky) and divided the waters above from those below the firmament. God then called the firmament heaven.

On day three He collected the waters under the firmament and separated them so that dry land could appear. He called the land earth and the waters seas.

On the fourth day the Lord placed the sun and moon in the firmament to light the earth and to regulate signs, seasons, days, and years (Genesis 1:14).

Then on the fifth day the Lord created the sea creatures and the fowls to fly above earth in the firmament of heaven.

On the sixth day God created the living creatures who would

inhabit the earth. The greatest of this creation was mankind, made in the image of God and given rulership over all living creatures on the earth (Genesis 1:27,28).

On the seventh day, He rested from His labors (Genesis 2:1-4).

If we can believe that God had the power to create all things from the substance of nothing, we should have no problem believing that He could also create them instantaneously, day by actual day, as He described in His revealed word.

Evolution Versus The Genesis Account

Max Patterson

THERE ARE THOSE WHO want to hold on to the Bible **and** the theory of evolution. Thus, a doctrine called “Theistic Evolution” was invented. That is, they teach that God created the world, all right, but He created it by the process of evolution. However, there are many problems and contradictions between the Genesis account and this preposterous theory. Listed here are just a few:

1. The book of Genesis states that plants came into existence before the sun was made (Genesis 1:11-14). Evolution, on the other hand, suggests that the sun had been shining for millions of years before the first plant appeared.

2. The book of Genesis states that birds were created on the fifth day of creation, and that creeping things, including insects and reptiles, were created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:21-24). Evolution teaches that birds developed long after insects and reptiles appeared.

3. The book of Genesis teaches that man was created specifically by the Lord from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Evolution claims man descended from some ape-like creature.

4. The book of Genesis notes that fruit-bearing trees were created before fish (Genesis 1:11). Evolution contends that fish evolved long before fruit-bearing trees.

5. The book of Genesis clearly speaks of a universal (worldwide) flood (Genesis 7:10-12, 17-20). Evolution denies there was ever any such universal flood.

When it gets right down to it, I had rather believe what God said than what some man has postulated. We can never go wrong, or be wrong, on the side of The Book.

Christianity Is Based Upon Valid Public Miracles

Roger E. Dickson

MAN-MADE RELIGIONS ARE often based upon the claim of a few spurious or non-public happenings which are claimed to be miracles. On this point, Luke presents in the book of Acts an overwhelming defense that gives an adequate answer for the origin and growth of Christianity. It is not a religion based upon the "claimed" miracles of a few believers. It is not a religion based upon the secret occurring of supposed miraculous works of a few early fanatics. The nature and demonstration of the Supernatural which permeates the beginning of the church is overwhelming. The miracles surrounding Jesus and the early work of the disciples were not done in secret. Paul affirmed before King Agrippa, *"For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner"* (Acts 26:26).

Paul rests his case on this fact: Neither the miracles of Jesus nor those of the early evangelists were done in secret. Therefore, these miracles prove the authenticity of the messengers as spokesmen from God. Such miraculous works were beyond denial. Thus, we must make a decision concerning this Jesus and the response He stimulated among so many people. If we accept Him for who and what He said He was, He will generate the same response in our lives.

The Miracles of Jesus Were Witnessed By **All Men**. The disciples affirmed that the foundation of Christianity was Jesus. This Jesus was proved to be of God by the miraculous works which came from God. Peter proclaimed, *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know"* (Acts 2:22). Those to whom Peter was speaking in Jerusalem could not deny that Jesus had worked wonderful deeds among them. God had *"anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him"* (Acts 10:38).

The Miracle of Pentecost Was Manifested to the City of Jerusalem. On the Day of Pentecost *"suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole*

house where they (the apostles) were sitting” (Acts 2:1-4). “And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them (the apostles) speak in his own language” (2:6). The great sound was heard by many in Jerusalem. The multitudes heard the apostles speaking in languages which they had never before studied (2:7,8). This miraculous beginning, therefore, was not something that was secret. It was known to all.

The Miracle of the Crippled Man in Jerusalem Was Known By All. Miracles were manifested for a purpose. We do not know the reason the crippled man at the gate Beautiful was left unhealed by Jesus until Acts 3, when Peter and John went up to the temple for the *“hour of prayer.”* It was on this occasion that Peter said to the cripple, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”* (3:6). The man arose, walked, and leaped, while praising God. *“And all the people saw him walking and praising God”* (3:9). They all ran together in order to find some explanation for what had happened. From this miracle, therefore, Peter had an audience for preaching that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God. Peter and John are thus confirmed to be valid speakers for Jesus.

Miracles Publicly Proved the Witness of the Apostles to all Men. The apostles had been promised the authority to command the supernatural power of God. Jesus had promised, *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”* (Acts 1:8). As Luke’s defense of Christianity unfolds, the working of this power in the lives of the apostles is most evident. From the very beginning of Christianity, the apostles were proved to be God’s messengers. From the day of Pentecost *“fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles”* (2:43). *“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people”* (5:12). *“Yet none of the rest (of the disciples) dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly”* (5:13). As a result of this great miraculous testimony of God, *“believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women”* (5:14). The people *“brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them”* (5:15). Many from the surrounding cities brought their sick, *“and they were all healed”* (5:16).

Though we do not have the personal experience of miracles today, our faith is based upon the testimony of those who personally saw and heard. For this reason, Luke is writing the defense of the book of Acts to Theophilus on behalf of all Christians (see 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-4).

THE GREATEST COUNSELOR

Glenn Colley

"I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT we are having problems in our marriage. For so long things went so smoothly . . . but not now. It started a while back over something about which we disagreed. We had a fuss and went to bed mad. The next day wasn't much better. Now time has passed and a wall has developed between us that we can't knock down. We've apologized about it, (several times), and tried to ignore it, but it still comes up all too often. Maybe we could talk to someone about it..."

Have you ever expressed these or similar feelings? Many have. However, most marriage problems, fortunately, do not fester to the point of needing a divorce court to settle them.

If you realize one day that your marriage needs some help, to whom, or where will you turn? Are you reluctant to open your problems to an outside party? Here is good news: The greatest and best marriage counselor that can be found anywhere is freely available to all. This is a sample of the priceless advice you will receive:

"It is not good that the man should be alone. Therefore shall a man **leave** his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."

"The husband is the head of the wife. Husbands love your wives ... as your own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning . . . but let it be the hidden man of the heart... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heir together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one to another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing."

In case you are wondering, these are various passages from

Genesis 2, Ephesians 5, and 1 Peter 3. The point is this: There is no question in the problems of life for which the Bible has no answer. Study it. God's Word will carry you through.

Develop An Inquiring Mind

T. Pierce Brown

THOSE OF US WHO preach and write need to make sure of what we preach and teach: *only those things authorized by our Lord*. Those who hear and read must take heed in two areas: what they hear, and how they hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).

Perhaps the most fundamental principle of learning is to develop an inquiring mind. I am persuaded that most normal little children have an inquiring mind. They want to know everything from "Why do rats have four legs?" to "What makes water wet?" I also think it probable that our social system, family style, teaching techniques, and other things may tend to stifle or pervert this inquiring mind. Therefore, we need to deliberately stimulate it, not only in our Bible classes, but at home, school, and anywhere else.

In every class or situation where it can be done appropriately, the teacher should teach the students to ask the following kinds of questions about any situation in or out of the Bible: **who, when, what, where, why, how, and so what?**

Not every one of these questions is pertinent in every kind of situation, of course, but if teachers will ask, then let the students know why they are asking, and encourage the students to ask these kinds of questions in their own study and in all other situations, they will find that their teaching has automatically become more productive because they will have stimulated individual private learning, and it will multiply the class efforts many-fold.

A word or two of caution needs to be given. First, never discourage the asking of any kind of serious question. If the student wonders, "Where did God come from?" do not ever reply something like this, "That's silly! Of course God did not come from anywhere. He always was!" If a person asks, "How do you know there is a God?" do not ever reply, "Any fool can tell by the evidence there is a God," or "A person with faith does not raise that kind of question! You must just take it by faith!"

Preachers can preach a whole series of sermons on almost any subject using these questions. They make excellent development of such subjects as baptism, the Lord's Supper, church music, giving,

the items of worship, and our service to God. What simpler, more powerful and easy-to-be-remembered lessons can be found on baptism than a series including “What is Bible baptism, and how do you know?” “Who is to be baptized?” “When?” “How is a person to be baptized, and why in that way?” “Why is one to be baptized?” “Does every ‘why’ question have an ‘in order to’ as well as a ‘because of?” “Do you need both? Why?” One can do the same kind of thing with any of the above subjects and any number of others and have simply powerful, and powerfully simple lessons.

But the main point I am trying to emphasize now is that preachers and teachers need to teach their students and audiences to raise these questions themselves about any subject they study. Whenever you preach a sermon or teach a lesson with this format, tell them what you are doing, and encourage them to do likewise in all cases.

If we can help all others develop an inquiring mind, not only about what God has said, but about persons, jobs, and our relationships, thousands of problems could be solved more readily.

Preachers, teachers, readers: In every class or situation where you can, encourage an inquiring mind and help others to develop it.

THE BIBLE INVITES YOUR INVESTIGATION

Charles Pugh

THE FOLLOWING NOTEWORTHY commendation was given the people of Berea by the historian, Luke: *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11). The religion of Jesus Christ has always invited honest examination and commended such when it occurs. And, when the fair-minded investigate thoroughly the claims of Christianity, the truth of the Christian faith becomes evident to them.

History records many examples of those who were either skeptical or indifferent to the claims of Jesus Christ, but who, upon honest investigation of the New Testament, became believers. In an old work entitled, *The Young Man’s Guide Against Infidelity*, and dated 1848, the author tells about one, Count Struenese, prime minister of Denmark in the latter eighteenth century, who endeavored to spread his philosophy of atheism and infidelity.

However, he studied Burnet's examination of the arguments for Christianity, and ultimately the doubts were removed which had formerly occupied his mind. He stated, "I never imagined that Christianity was founded upon such strong evidences . . . After a calm examination, I have found them to be unexceptionable, and none, if they only take proper time . . . can ever examine them without being convinced of the truth . . . The more I read, the more I grow convinced how unjust those objections are with which Christianity is charged."

The invitation to investigate is still open. "Present your case," says the Lord. "*Bring forth your strong reasons...*" (Isaiah 41:21). "*Come now and let us reason together,*" says the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18).

You And The Bible

Bobby Key

MANY PEOPLE CLAIM TO believe at least a part of the Bible. However, the majority of even religious people do not believe that God's Word alone is sufficient to guide us religiously. Some say the Bible is not true, while others say that it does not contain *all the truth* we need to serve God. As the result of these attitudes, men have written creeds to supply that which they believe to be deficient in God's Word.

Of course, the Bible will not help us unless we believe it. The Hebrews writer said, "*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, nor being mixed with faith in them that heard it*" (Hebrews 4:2). "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God . . . It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (1 Corinthians 1:18,21).

The Bible itself claims to be the truth. It contains all that we need to know, all that we need to believe, and all that we need to do to make us complete in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Bible, unread, will not profit anyone. To hear the Word and not do it will not save your soul. Study carefully the following:

The Word of God is *pure*; however, it will purify only those who *obey it* (1 Peter 1:22). The Word of God is *perfect*; however, it perfects only those who *do it* (James 1:22-25). The Word of God is *powerful to save*; however, it saves only those who *believe and obey it* (Romans 1:16). The Word of God *endures forever*; however,

it will cause only those who do God's will to *abide forever* (1 John 2:17; Matthew 7:21). The Word of God is *life-giving*; however, it gives life only to those who *live it* (John 3:3-8; Luke 8). The Word of God is *complete*; but our beliefs and practices must conform to its teaching in order for us to be *complete* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Dear reader, you have an obligation to the Bible. Follow Paul's exhortation and "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*" (Colossians 3:16). Remember, the Word of God treated so lightly now will judge us in the great day of all days (John 12:48).

Salvation From Hell

Allan E. Flaxman

"God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

How horrible is the Bible picture of Hell! Many years ago I listened to a sermon delivered by one of our outstanding preachers, based on the biblical description of Hell. It was not funny. It was designed to make his audience "sit up and take notice." It certainly got that response from me and I feel confident that it had the same effect on everyone in that large audience.

Hell is a place of darkness! Hell is a place of fire! Hell is a place of suffering and weeping and gnashing of teeth! In Hell the condemned will remember all the events on earth they wish they could forget—for example, the times they ignored those who were trying to teach and encourage them to become Christians.

Hell is eternal—it will never end! You can stay out of Hell by obeying the Gospel, but if you once get into Hell you will *never* get out! Not a pretty picture! And remember, God painted that horrible picture and doubtless used such graphic language so that it would be a warning to everyone through the ages (Matthew 13:42-50; 18:8,9; 8:12; Jude 13; Luke 16:27-31; Matthew 25:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.)

The Scriptures say clearly that Hell is the ultimate destiny of all unforgiven sinners (Romans 6:23.) That raises the question, "What is sin?" Also, "How does God regard sin that He would prepare a place as horrible and as horrifying as Hell, to be the eternal lake of fiery punishment for unforgiven sinners?"

Perhaps we should answer these questions by noting first that God's present attitude toward sin is not new! In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, God promised Adam and Eve that to eat the

one forbidden fruit would bring about their death. Thousands of years later we are all too well aware that every word God said was true. In the days of Noah the whole world population—except for eight people—was drowned in the Flood. Why? Because of sin. And, as the story continues on through the Old Testament until the coming of Christ, God's attitude toward sin has never changed (Genesis 2:17; 6-8:14). Seeing the story of mankind unfold, history surely has taught us that God never fails to keep any promise He ever makes.

The New Testament takes up the story of God's relationship with man, continuing to emphasize His severe attitude toward sin. "*Sin*" it says, "*is the transgression of God's law*" (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15.) Again it says, "*He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17). Gets one to thinking, doesn't it? **How sinful is sin?** The New Testament actually speaks of the "*sinfulness of sin*" (Romans 7:13). It also points out that the sacrificial blood of animals has no power to "take away" sin, that is, to cause the sinner to experience God's forgiveness (Hebrews 10:4). God continues to view sin as the one factor that separates man from Himself!

But, in this Christian Age, a new event has been introduced into the equation. "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,*" says Paul (1 Timothy 1:15). "*For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). Is this a "back-flip" on God's part? Is He having "second thoughts" about Hell? Not at all. The advent of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world was a God-planned event! Planned, in fact, "*before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8). **How marvelous and how wonderful His Love, that He should go to these extreme measures—giving His "Only begotten Son" as the only qualifying and suitable sacrifice to keep sinful man out of Hell!**

And that brings forward yet another thought, raised in the Hebrews Letter. The writer, by Heavenly inspiration says, "*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* (Hebrews 10:28,29). No wonder we are reminded immediately, "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.*" For vengeance, indeed, belongs rightfully to Him (verses 30,31)!

Yet, think of it. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). Hell remains more horrible than we can imagine! And, God so loved us all, that *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

The question is, “By our manner of life, which do we choose for ourselves: God’s righteous judgment or His great love?”

Your Feelings Can Deceive You!

G.F. Raines

THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES in the Holy Bible tell us that man’s feeling are often deceitful:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26).

“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself— it is not in man that walketh to direct His steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

“The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9).

James A. Harding, one of the greatest gospel preachers since the days of the apostles, has well said:

“When a man trusts his feelings for his knowledge of pardon, without properly weighing the testimony of God’s Spirit in God’s Word, there is no telling to what he will drift. The religion of feeling leads to all sorts of fanaticism and folly, to every degree of cruelty and crime.

“Your feelings depend upon your faith, and the stronger the faith the more intense the feeling, and that, too, whether your faith be well founded or not. The belief of a lie will affect your feelings just as much as the belief of the truth, as many of you well know.”

By the Book of God we are made **wise** unto salvation (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15). The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13). When we, from the heart, do the will of God revealed in the Bible by the Holy Spirit, we know that we are children of God, and in no other way can we *know* that we *know* God; for *“hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His commandments”* (1 John 2:3). *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”* (John 17:3).

Our feelings are competent to testify as to things which take place in us, but they cannot testify as to **what takes place in the mind of God**. All we know about the mind of God is what the Holy

Spirit has revealed: *“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Pardon takes place, not in man, but in the mind of God. The Holy Spirit in the New Testament tells us what God requires us to do to become His children. When our spirits are conscious (aware) of the fact that we have done what God has revealed in His Word through the Holy Spirit that we must do to become His children, *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, *“the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:8,9), unequivocally says: *“Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21).

THE LOST VISION

Hershel Dyer

IN THIS WORLD OF so many differing faiths and practices, all claiming Christ as their Savior, a restoration to God’s way must be diligently preached. Were the prophets and apostles of Scripture living, they would be pressing for massive reforms by those who claim Christ as their Lord. They would be interested in no compromise with those doctrines or practices which are untaught in their own Spirit-inspired writings.

We are witnessing in the church today one of the saddest losses of the prophetic, apostolic vision. Rather than helping preachers and others who are astray, some of our preachers are compromising and sacrificing truth to ingratiate themselves with these misled groups. Their proffered fellowship with those in error hinders others of us who are striving to lead souls into the way of truth and righteousness. It can only bring the wrath of God upon all who thus *“hinder the truth in unrighteousness”* (Romans 1:18).

We wish that those who compromise for worldly advantage could have the attitude of C.H. Spurgeon, the renowned London preacher, who declared in a sermon long ago:

“Everywhere, in all sects, I see inventions of men arrogating the place of the commandments of God. Let us sweep our temples, and return unto the Word of the Lord. Say not that ye believe the Book when you act as though it were not true—

Will they believe it? Will they practice it? Will they abide by the standard?"

— **From the sermon:** *Nominal Christians—Real Infidels.*

The **standard** has never changed. It continues to be the Bible, God's inspired word. **It must be our guide and our law.**

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

John Thiesen

EVER SINCE THE FALL of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from God by sin. It is this separation which has created the need for a priesthood to represent us to God.

PRIESTS ARE MEDIATORS

A priest is a mediator who stands between God and sinners. His job, from the earliest times, has been to offer up sacrifices to God in order to make propitiation for sinners and to pray on their behalf to God. For example, Moses' brother Aaron was a priest. Every year, when offering up the sacrificial atonement animals both for himself and for all Israel, he laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all the sins of Israel before releasing it to carry the iniquity of the nation into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). No one could take this priestly authority to himself, but only those called by God for the purpose. ***“And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”*** (Hebrews 5:4). Among the Jews, only Aaron and his sons were set aside for this holy work. It was important that the priest be a merciful person in order properly to approach God on behalf of others.

Even before God set up the Israelite nation, he had priests operating in the world. Melchizedec, for example, who came out to bless Abraham following his victory over the kings, was called ***“the priest of the most high God”*** (Genesis 14:18). During that same pre-law period, Moses' father-in-law was known as “the priest of Midian” and offered sacrifices to God with Moses, suggesting he may have been a priest authorized by God (Exodus 3:11; 18:12).

GOD'S PRIESTHOOD TODAY

Our High Priest today is Jesus Christ the Son of God, ***“set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”*** (Hebrews 8:1). At God's right hand, ***“he is able also to save them to the***

uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). The sacrifice He offered for our sins was His own blood on the cross. This supreme sacrifice of Himself supersedes all previous sacrifices offered in the world, which were only a shadow of His. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14).

Under Christ their High Priest, all Christians function as sub-priests, *“an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices consist of: (1) praise and thanks of our lips; (2) doing good to others; (3) sharing with those in need (Hebrews 13:15,16); and making intercession by prayer for all people and authorities (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

Understanding The Times And Knowing What To Do

Jack Harriman

IN THE CHURCH, the Lord intended there to be leaders and followers. Followers are many.

Leaders are few. Effective leaders are even fewer.

Poor leadership has always been a hindrance to God's people. King Saul commanded his army to fast, and as a result, they became too weak to fight (2 Samuel 14:26,27). Jesus said the Jewish leaders were *“blind guides”* (Matthew 23:16,17). Diotrephes was a leader not to be followed (3 John 9-11).

Effective leaders have always been in demand. Moses asked Jethro to be his eyes in the desert (Numbers 10:31). He later prayed for a man to replace him as leader. *“Let the Lord...set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd”* (Numbers 27:16,17).

These are perilous times for the Lord's people. The need for effective leadership has never been more evident—at least in my lifetime, and such leaders seem to be diminishing in number. The writer of 2 Chronicles 12:32 spoke of the *“children of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.”*

May God raise up such leaders in every congregation of His people.

THE PARADOX OF THE CHURCH

Hardeman Nichols

WHEN A CONGREGATION IS established according to the divine pattern of the New Testament, it is composed of **elements of perfection** and **of imperfection**. Since it is a divine institution, it deserves respect and appreciation. Everything that such a church is and does, as authorized of God, is divine.

God's part is perfect. He has designed a perfect plan of salvation and a perfect system of worship (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is its only guide, is *"the perfect law of liberty"* (James 1:25). The church has a perfect Savior who holds before us His perfect life for our goal, saying, *"Follow Me"* (Matthew 16:24).

But here is the paradox. Man is not perfect, nor does he perfectly follow the Lord. **The human element in the church is as imperfect as its members.** The church would have been an imperfect institution if it had been designed only for perfect people! It would have no members at all, *"For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not"* (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

The church's perfection is retained by *the way it deals with our imperfections*. It does not overlook sin, but believes the grace of God is perfect in dealing with it. And it must distinguish between *the penitent* and *the rebellious*, between the *humble, weak* and *willful reprobate*. God now *"commandeth all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30).

The church believes that Christ promises pardon for all imperfect beings who, in godly sorrow for their sins, penitently seek mercy and forgiveness. His invitation is to imperfect men. When one repents and is baptized, Jesus forgives his sins and adds him to His church (Acts 2:38, 47). Covered by the blood of Christ, the penitent and faithful Christian is perfect before His God, as he walks in the light (1 John 1:7).

The church offers strength to help us in our weaknesses, courage when we are fainthearted, comfort when we are sad, and *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:3), along the way. Its call is to all men to come and be saved. Its God-ordained teachings and services restore lost humanity back to God. Thanks be unto God for His perfect church and its wondrous benefits to imperfect men.

A VERY SPECIAL DAY

Dalton Key

JUST WHOSE DAY IS IT, anyway? Don't you believe **the Lord's Day** ought to be given back to *the Lord*?

Sunday should be more than another busy, pleasure-filled, weekend play day. It ought to be more than another excuse for sleeping late and lounging about the house. It must be seen as more than another opportunity to water the grass or wash the family car.

Sunday, the first day of the week, is special. It is the Lord's Day—a day for worship.

The apostle Paul tarried seven days in Troas, until "*the first day of the week*," when he met with the saints of that city in worship (Acts 20:6,7). John, "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*," wrote, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*" (Revelation 1:10). And is it any wonder why? Our Lord arose from the dead on **the first day of the week**. The church was established on Pentecost Day, **the first day of the week**. This day, the Lord's Day, is more than ordinary. *It is special.*

Justin Martyr, one of the recognized historians of the early church, wrote near the beginning of the second century, "On Sunday a meeting is held of all who live in the cities and villages...they rise together and send up prayers."

Early disciples faced terrible persecution in gathering together for worship on the Lord's Day, yet they assembled and worshipped in spite of their adversities. According to John Fox, in his Book of Martyrs, many early Christians: were burnt alive, others were dragged by their feet through the streets naked until they expired; some were scalded to death, many were stoned, and a great number had their brains beaten out with clubs. Nero is said to have dressed Christians in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed them to axle-trees, and then set them on fire to light up his gardens at night.

And what of us? We have great difficulty convincing more modern saints, with no fear of physical oppression, to drive the new car down a four-lane, paved highway to a comfortable, climate-controlled building.

By the way, what will you be doing this Sunday?

IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Stan Mitchell

IT IS NO SECRET THAT worship styles are the big issue in churches

of Christ. It seems that agendas abound. On the one hand, there is selfish desire on the part of some to do what is right in their own eyes; on the other, there is the fear that any adjustment is a challenge to the “way we have always done it.”

Worship should lift our spirits to the heavens. Often, however, it either bores us to tears, or brings about upset and heartbreak.

There is another way. We can still approach God in a manner that pleases Him, and uplifts us all. The Bible lays down two principles that must affect the worship of those whose top priority is to please Him.

1. Worship is Conducted on God’s Terms

“Let us be thankful and so worship God accordingly with reverence and awe, for ‘Our God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28,29).

If God takes the trouble to instruct us in an aspect of worship, *that ends the debate there and then!* This affects our worship in song (Colossians 3:16), who it is that leads worship in the assembly (1 Timothy 2:11,12), when we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7), and other subjects. The God who formed our hearts knows what those hearts need; the child of God will humbly and willingly oblige. If this criterion is not met, no other will suffice!

2. Worship Must Build

“When you come together...all of these must be done for the strengthening (edification) of the church” (Corinthians 14:26).

Once (and only then) we have established that a worship practice is Biblical, we can ask how it affects humans. The Bible draws from the language of construction to express this thought. As a preacher, it fascinates me that people expect a sermon to be well prepared and thoughtful (and so they should), but that other aspects of worship can be haphazard and “off the top of the head.” *When it comes to serving God and His people, there is no such thing as being over prepared!* I think the Lord deserves better than a song leader tossing the hymn book to his family on the way to church and saying, “Choose a couple of songs, will you? I forgot I was supposed to lead singing.” What we often think of as spontaneous is often nothing more than unprepared, and results in a worship service that is about as deep as a birdbath.

The question is not what will produce the most credits, but what will please the Creator. Worship is not *production*, it is *petition*. It is not measured by the world’s standards; it brings us, heart and mind, up to the Lord’s standards.

There should be only one agenda in worship. **God’s.** †