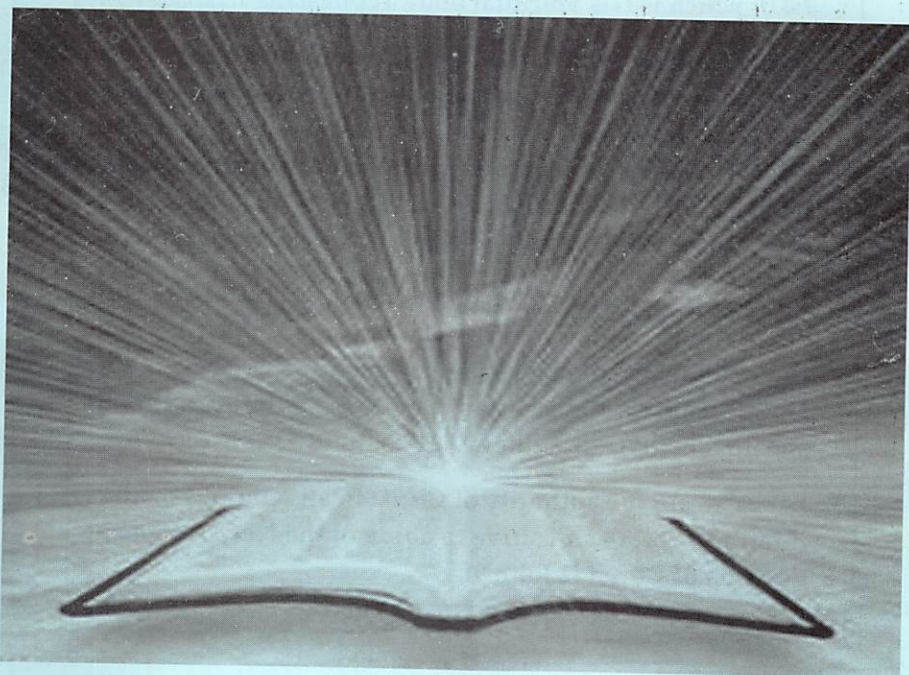


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Boast Not Of Tomorrow

LIVING IN THIS WORLD is living with uncertainty. Anything may happen any time to any one of us. The pandemic hit us all suddenly last year, and as we were thinking in the beginning of this year that it was waning, it suddenly came back again with more vigor and force. Accidents, tremors, fires, floods, diseases of all kinds, are a continuous reminder to us of a world of uncertainties. The wise man wrote: "Boast not of tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." (Proverbs 27:1). We can't promise ourselves the continuance of our time on earth. No, not of tomorrow, not to speak of many days or years to come. (Matthew 6:34).



Again, James, another inspired writer wrote: "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city; spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:13, 14). Do not all of us assume that tomorrow, next week, next year are all ours; and are we all not continually making plans which necessitate the assumption that we will be here and able fully to carry them all out? It was this common characteristic of humanity which prompted Jesus to teach the parable of the "Rich Fool" who in formulating his plans for the future, forgot the length of life is a matter on which man has no control; and discovered to his dismay that just as he believed himself to be in position to enjoy

the fruits of his plans, he was called, by death, forever more, away from them. (Luke 12:16-21).

We are without assurance that we shall be living the next minute, much less the next day. Death, which is no respecter of persons, comes with shocking suddenness, without an instant warning. Hebrews 9:27 says: "And as it is appointed for men, to die once, but after this the judgment." Both death and judgment are appointed by God, for all humans. (Genesis 3:19). The apostle Paul wrote: "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." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When man dies he does not cease to live. Physical death is the separation of the spirit or soul from the body. Speaking of death, the Bible says, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Man is not only body, which came out of earth, but he is a spirit which he received from God directly. (Genesis 2:7)). Having been created in the likeness and image of God, man, like God, will live forever. When man dies, the Bible teaches, he goes to his eternal home. (Ecclesiastes 12:5). In that eternal home of man there are only two spiritual places, where all will enter to live forever and ever, the realm of everlasting punishment or the eternal life in heaven. (Matthew 25:46). Through Jesus Christ God has provided the opportunity for all to choose the eternal life of heaven. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).



TRUE WORSHIP

J.C. Choate

IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES people of God assembled on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshipping God. We have an example of this in Acts 20:7. Thus, we are to come together on the Lord's day for the same reason. As a matter of fact, we are exhorted to attend all of the assemblies. (Heb. 10:25). If a Christian fails to do this it means that he has sinned before God. Now you may ask: "Is it all that important?" Yes, it is.

The Bible speaks of three kinds of worship. Paul came across a group of people who were worshipping, but there was something wrong. What was it? Well, Paul explained that their worship was in

ignorance. (Acts 17:23). Have times changed much? No, because many worship God throughout the world, but much of it is nothing more than ignorant worship. Hence, it is not enough just to worship. Again, the Lord informed a group of people of his day that their worship was in vain. (Matt. 15:9). Well, why? Because, as he spake, their worship was after the doctrines and commandments of men. Finally, the scripture outlines a plan for true worship. Christ says: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). If one is going to worship God in an acceptable way then it must be in spirit and in truth, for after all, why should one bother to worship if it is not going to be acceptable?

Now to this question: What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? Simply that one must worship, understanding that which he is doing, and at the same time, according to the Lord's will. Paul said: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (1 Cor. 14:15). As to the truth, Christ has said: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17).

True worship consists of what is commonly referred to as five items, or acts, of worship. They simply are: Bible study, prayer, singing, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving. Each one must be done in spirit and in truth for God to acknowledge it.

First, the Lord's people are expected to assemble to study God's word. (2 Tim. 2:15). This must be done in spirit, or with understanding. In other words, one must lay aside everything and fasten, or centre, his mind upon the word of truth. He must also study according to the truth, or will, of God. That is, he must be willing to lay man's thoughts and conceptions down and simply take God at his word, of course, rightly dividing the word of truth at all times.

Second, the people of God are to meet for the purpose of engaging in prayer. (1 Thess. 5:17). This too, must be entered into with the spirit and the understanding. Prayer is a wonderful medium, and a wonderful blessing which God has bestowed upon man. But this privilege can be abused. Many enter prayer with their minds upon the things of the world, and so on. Be it remembered then, that if one is going to pray in such a way as to be heard of God he is going to have to be in the right frame of mind to do so. Likewise, prayer must be according to truth. One's Prayer must be in harmony with the will of God to be answered.

Third, the Lord's disciples are to come together to sing. (Eph. 5:19). This must be done also in spirit and understanding. The words of a song should truly come to life as one puts his mind to his task.

Furthermore, as one sings according to the truth, the melody is made in his heart instead of on some instrument of music.

Fourth, God's people are to assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper. In this case, one is to remember that the Lord was nailed to the cross, and thus, shed his blood for the sins of the world. This supper is a memorial. Then too, the truth would require that one do this each first day of the week. (Acts 20:7).

Fifth, Christians are to meet on the Lord's day to give. (1 Cor. 16:2). In spirit, one is to recognize the importance of such giving; in truth, he is to do it as he has been prospered, being true to himself, and to God.

Now, what about you? Do you worship God in an acceptable way? Think on these things.

I Am Free

Jimmy Jividen

IN THE MASS CONFUSION of contemporary religion I am thankful that I can be a part of a group that knows true freedom in Christ.

It is a group where I am not required to believe any human creed, follow any human tradition, or support any clergy. I am free to follow the Bible only.

It is a group in which I am not required to participate in any form of worship, ecclesiastical organization, or religious practice that is not authorized by Jesus Christ Himself. I am free to follow Jesus only.

It is a group in which I am not required to give fellowship to or approval of religious teachings and moral conduct which are contrary to the will of God. I am free to follow my conscience which has been sensitized by the teachings of the Scriptures without having to compromise my convictions.

It is a group in which I am not required to accept without question either the **status quo** of the past or the novel visions of the future. I am free to open the Bible myself and ask, "What saith the Scriptures?"

It is a group in which I am not required to be affiliated with or give support to any human institution. I am free to be the church of Christ as planned by God, founded by Jesus Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

I have thrown off the chains of human ecclesiastical traditions. I have broken out of the prison house of clergy oppression. I have

refused to be enslaved by either the subjective human experiences of self or others.

I have issued my declaration of independence from human religions and have committed myself to follow Jesus Christ and Him alone. I will dwell in the fellowship of other children of God who, like myself, are blood-bonded to one another in the church of Christ.

The Advisability of Autonomy

Tom Holland

GOD'S WILL IS GOOD, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12:3).

God has a will for His saved ones, the church, to be organized for maximum effectiveness in His service. God's will may be ascertained by a diligent study of the New Testament.

An examination of inspired Scripture shows that some modern types of church organization are conspicuous by their absence. One cannot read about popes in the New Testament. One does read that Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). Church government by a hierarchy is not a part of God's revealed plan but has originated with man. Presiding bishops, conferences, religious conventions, have come from human endeavors without Divine authority.

God's plan for church organization reveals the autonomy of the local congregation. The church at Philippi had bishops and deacons (Philippians 1:1). This congregation was a self-governing congregation under the authority of Christ.

Surely we appreciate the wisdom of God in His plan for church organization. If all the congregations in a given area go into apostasy, a particular congregation does not have to "follow the crowd."

Churches of Christ have no earthly headquarters. The congregations of God's people are not under a presiding bishop. Ecclesiastical organizations which overtly or subtly attempt to set policy of "renewal" or "restructure" for the Lord's church operate apart from the authority of Christ.

Let each congregation once more get involved in dedicated service to God so that sincere worship is given Him and the message of salvation is faithfully proclaimed. Then the church will grow again as it did during the era when God's people were content with congregational autonomy.

RUTH: A Light Shining From The Dark

David Deffenbaugh

SET DURING THE VERY dark times of the judges, the story of Ruth shines as an exceeding bright light. The period of the judges is remembered as one of hardship, fear, cruelty, and immorality. In bold relief is the story of Ruth, set in those hard times but characterized by faith instead of fear, kindness instead of cruelty and virtue instead of immorality.

Like many before and since, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was caused to wonder about God's treatment of her because of the loss of her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons. So great were her doubts that she no longer wanted to be called Naomi (meaning pleasant) by her friends and family, instead she chose the name Mara (meaning bitter). Little did she realize the fullness she enjoyed in her devoted daughter-in-law upon her return to Bethlehem from Moab. She could only see her emptiness.

The reputation of Ruth's devotion and love preceded her appearance as a gleaner in the fields of Boaz. It was likely no surprise to this noble and influential man to learn that this lovely woman working among the poor and destitute was the same Ruth of whom he had already heard. One willing to leave her own family and homeland to care for her mother-in-law would also certainly not hesitate to labor in order to help provide food for the table.

Easily recognizing the exceptional character of this Moabitess, Boaz saw that she was specially cared for. The provisions of the harvesters were at her disposal, and more than the usual amount of grain was left behind for her to glean. And when Ruth returned to her mother-in-law with the excessive fruit of her day's labor, Naomi knew something special had happened. A sprig of joy must have sprouted in her embittered heart upon learning the identity of the gracious owner of the field. Boaz was a near kinsman. Boaz was the man who could, if he would, bring blessing back to the family of Elimelech.

Noami wisely advised Ruth concerning the way to make known to Boaz how he might greatly help not only this exceptional Moabitess, but his own relatives as well. The instructions given by Naomi and followed by Ruth expressed the urgency and the magnitude of this request, but everything was done in such a way as to maintain dignity and honor for the young widow.

Boaz took action. First satisfying all requirements of the law, he

married Ruth. Upon the birth of their child, Naomi was reminded that though she had doubted God's love for her, He had blessed her much, and that Ruth proved to be better to her than seven sons. Unknown to Naomi and her contemporaries was the surpassing blessing of this grandson's grandson, who would receive a promise from God ultimately fulfilled in none other than the Savior of the world.

What a beautiful vehicle the story of Ruth is for the messages of dignity and honor, hope in the face of despair, and trust in the providential care of almighty God.

Great Evangelistic Preaching

Cecil May, Jr.

IF WE ARE TO preach with evangelistic power and achieve evangelistic results, we must preach with conviction and faith founded on the following facts:

Without Christ, no one can be saved. Jesus said, *'No one comes to the Father except by me'* (John 14:6). *"There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). J. M. McCaleb wrote in his famous hymn, "Unless they hear, they cannot live; the gospel is for all." If the world is all right like it is, why tell them anything? If we do not passionately believe that we know something the world does not know, we will not fervently proclaim the One who can save.

The Gospel is God's power to save. *"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved it is the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18). *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation"* (Romans 1:16). God's love, demonstrated in the sacrifice of His Son, is what will draw us to God (John 12:32-33) and cause us to love (1 John 4:19). The Gospel can make the drunk and the stoned sober and the carouser and profligate pure. It instructs the teacher of error in the way of the Lord more perfectly. It turns the selfish materialist into a joyful giver. The word of the Gospel, *"the voice of the Son of God,"* brings eternal life out of death, and justification from condemnation (John 5:24-25).

Preaching is God's chief instrument for saving man. The Gospel is in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:5). Jesus commanded, *"Go...preach the gospel; ...he that believes...shall be saved"* (Mark 16:15). *"After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew*

not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Bible does not here elevate one method of communicating the Gospel over another; it does make communicating the Gospel the means to salvation. Preaching is communicating the Gospel.

Great things happen in the act of preaching. Peter's preaching pricked 3000 with conviction of sin and desire for salvation (Acts 2:37). Phillip's preaching brought one man an understanding of the work of Christ and joyous acceptance of salvation (Acts 8:27-39). Paul's preaching at Athens brought mockery and procrastination, but it also brought faith to some (Acts 17:32-34).

Trite repetition of outworn traditions will empty church buildings. "Nattering nabobs of negativism," to whom the Gospel consists entirely in unrelenting condemnation and exposure of others, drive their hearers to look for positive light elsewhere. A diluted Gospel, soothing syrup for itching ears, that never reproves, rebukes, or teaches, may attract some, but will save none. Preach *"all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27) with Christ always at the center (1 Corinthians 2:2). Imbibe and live the Word of God. Love the people to whom you preach. Weekly lay open the Gospel to the people. Apply it pointedly and lovingly to their problems and needs. That kind of preaching usually reaches people. It always glorifies God.

The Need For A Revelation

John Thiesen

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES of human history, men have sought God. There seems to be in humankind an innate need to look to a higher power and to know the Creator.

In this search for God, people do not have to look far to see that God exists. Nature is a great teacher in this respect: *"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"* (Romans 1:20). God's creative power, benevolence, order; and love of beauty are all painted on the canvass of nature.

Nature Is Limited

However, there are many things about God which nature cannot show us. For example, it does not reveal God's plans for us, nor

His will for us. Nature does not tell us what to do to be saved from our sins or how to worship God. It does not reveal God's past dealings with our forefathers; neither does it tell about future things such as heaven, hell, or the judgment day. To know these things about which nature is silent, we need a revelation from God.

Many attempts have been made to find God in various ways, all of which have failed. Some have turned to worshipping nature itself, but that is serving the creature rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). Others have carved, molded, or engraved images to worship, but these have no breath in them and are unable to see, hear, speak, walk, or to do anything to help the worshippers. Others have tried philosophy and meditation, but these have also failed because *"it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23).

God Had Revealed Himself

At various times in history God has revealed Himself through inspired prophets and apostles by miracles, dreams, visions, and signs. These men of God spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

In the fullness of time, God sent His own Son, who is the ultimate revelation of the invisible God. God *"was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"* (1 Timothy 3:16). In times gone by, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets, but now *"hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2).

This revelation has been deposited into permanent, written form in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible contains the history of God's appearances and work in the world, His laws, His teachings, and the life story of His Son and Savior of the world, Jesus Christ the Son of God. When we read, believe, and obey these Scriptures, eternal life will be ours. *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name"* (John 20:31).

The Wizard of Oz Syndrome

Bill Dillon

IN THE CLASSIC TALE, **The Wizard of Oz**, a young lady named Dorothy was told to follow the yellow brick road which would lead her to the great and mighty Wizard of Oz, who could send her home

again. In the expectation of having all her fears relieved and all her hopes realized, Dorothy traveled down the yellow brick road—but at the last—the Wizard was a fake, and the yellow brick road was misleading.

Unfortunately, the world of today is filled with souls who are searching for a God like the Wizard was supposed to be. They look for churches and religious groups who will serve as their yellow brick road. In the end, they suffer the multiple heartache of disillusionment, discouragement, and deception.

On May 3, 1993, *U.S. News & World Report* ran a story captioned "The Final Days of Ranch Apocalypse." It was the story of David Koresh and the fall of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas. This, and other stories, remind us that religious deception is as much a part of our present day as it was in the 1st century.

Bible warnings about false teachers are in abundance:

"Little children, let no man deceive you" (1 John 3:7). "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1).

The church at Ephesus was commended because they had *"tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"* (Revelation 2:2).

Paul, the apostle, admonished early believers to *"prove all things; hold fast to that which is good"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

It is good to be reminded that truth is to be held in importance above all things. Jesus said that only the truth will set us free (John 8:32). It is also essential to place our confidence in the strong cord of God's Word (John 17:17), and not in the teachings of men, which are but whisker webs, blowing in the winds of life.

By What Authority?

Rod Kyle

JESUS HAD JUST DRIVEN the moneychangers from the inner court of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. Approached by the Chief Priests, He was asked, *"By what authority are you doing these things?"* (Mark 11:28).

That really is a valid question. Authority makes life functional. We face it at every turn in our lives.

Let's be honest. How can we know if anyone's moral or religious authority is valid if it originates only from the heart of fallible man? Why should someone else's idea be any more valid than mine?

Necessity demands an objective standard handed down to fallible man by an infallible God!

There is such a standard. The Bible states, *“Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God...which things we (inspired men) speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but those taught by the Spirit,...”* (1 Corinthians 2:11,13.) This passage tells us that God’s mind has been made known to us through the inspired writers of the Bible. Here are a few of the many other passages that teach this essential truth—2 Timothy 3:15-17, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 3:3-4. Read them, because here is the standard you must follow.

Jesus put it this way in John 12:48, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive my sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”*

Is your authority God’s authority?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Joe C. Magee

THE QUESTION HAS OFTEN arisen about the age of accountability for children. Some have agreed that twelve years should be accepted because this was the age of Jesus when He first answered his parents, *“Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?”*

But age in years does not determine one’s level of maturity or his ability to comprehend. Many twelve-year-old school boys will tell you that their main interests are sports, recess, summer vacation, and girls, not necessarily in that order.

At a very early age one learns that some actions are rewarded and others result in punishment. The child’s determination concerning an act is often prompted by his experience of whether that action is acceptable or not. He does that which is good because of the ensuing rewards and he avoids that which is bad because of the fear of punishment. He may or may not agree that the act itself was good or bad.

I think many today build a relationship with God on the same principle. They do that which is good to gain favor with God and a hope of heaven, while they avoid that which is bad to escape hell. But is this real accountability or it just following certain rules?

As the child develops, hopefully, he will come to appreciate doing that which is right because it is right, and he will fear doing that

which is wrong because it *is* wrong. He also recognizes that in this life not all wrong is punished and not all good is rewarded; but this is not the determining factor in his behavior.

While he does not discount the promise of heaven or the horrible thoughts of hell, he is governed in his every day life by what he knows to be right or wrong. The daily reward for doing right is *in the right itself*, while the punishment for doing wrong is *within the knowledge of having done wrong*. He no longer lingers on the possibility of the results of his actions. He contemplates the right or wrong ahead of time.

This is real and mature accountability. From this day forward he need not live in fear; but through love of the truth and righteousness he goes about his daily activities with a determined attitude to do that which is right and avoid that which is wrong. The apostle John writes, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18)

When we love the right and despise the wrong we have reached that plateau of accountability which displays maturity (perfection) in Christ.

The Holy Spirit's Use of the Word in Conversion

Gary C. Hampton

A LUMBERJACK CUTS DOWN a tree. An axe is the instrument used by the lumberjack to cut down the tree. Similarly, it might truthfully be said that the Holy Spirit converts a man from sin. The Bible is the instrument He uses to convert.

Born of the Word

Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John 3:1-8).

The Holy Spirit inspired Peter, Paul, and James to tell us by what means that birth occurs. Peter said Christians are born of the incorruptible seed, which is the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). The Corinthians were begotten *"through the gospel,"* according to 1 Corinthians 4:15. James wrote, *"Of His own will He brought us forth*

by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). Clearly, the Holy Spirit uses the inspired Word as an instrument to change the hearts of men.

Given Life Through The Word

Prior to becoming a Christian, one was dead in his sins. *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins"* (Ephesians 2:1). The only way out of that state is by being made alive again by God, which is a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul said, *"the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life"* (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The Comforter uses the Word as an instrument to make one alive. *"This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life ... I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have given me life"* (Psalm 119:50,93). The Lord said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

Hearts Cut With The Sword

Paul instructed Christians to put on the armor of God. *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17). The Word of God is described as *"living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12).

Peter used that very sword on the day of Pentecost. He quoted from Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 16:8-11; and 110:1. He used those verses to show that God had planned for Jesus to die and had raised Him from the dead. Then, he said,

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." His hearers were cut to their hearts with the truth and asked what they must do to be saved. Instead of telling them to wait for a direct operation of the Spirit, he told them what they must do. Those that gladly obeyed that truth were baptized and added to their number (Acts 2:41,42).

The Conversion Of The Samaritans

After the death of Stephen, the church at Jerusalem began to be greatly persecuted. *"They were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."* Those who were scattered preached everywhere they went.

Philip went to Samaria and *"preached Christ to them."* The people

heard what he said and noted the miracles he worked which confirmed that he was a spokesman from God. *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized"* (Acts 8:1-12).

The Spirit's Role In Lydia's Conversion

If ever there was a case calling for direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart of a sinner, Lydia would seem to be that case. She lived far from the nearest preacher. She was devout, as is evidenced by her regularly going to the riverside on the Sabbath day for prayer. Yet, the Holy Spirit remained consistent by choosing to send men to hear the message.

In a vision, Paul learned of the need for Macedonia to hear the Gospel. Paul concluded the *"Lord had called"* them to preach the Gospel to the people of Macedonia. While in Philippi, they went to the prayer-gathering by the river. Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord through the preaching of Paul. Notice, Luke says she gave heed to *"the things spoken by Paul."* She was baptized as a result of hearing the words of the Spirit (Acts 16:6-15).

Conclusion

One must be born of water and Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. That birth is a result of one's obeying the words of the Spirit, which are the seed of the kingdom. Spiritual life is also found in God's Word. The Holy Spirit has never revealed Himself directly to a sinner to tell him what to do to be saved. Instead, He has always used men, like Peter, Philip, and Paul, to proclaim His Word.

One-Man Pastor System

Frank Chesser

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE church of the Bible is a divine arrangement. No man can improve upon God's system. The slightest human variation in God's organizational blueprint mars its perfection. Such tampering is a manifestation of man's contempt for God's way and his determination to have his own way.

God's pattern for the organization of the church is set forth in child-like simplicity. There is no justification for misunderstanding. There is only *one head* of the church, and that is **Jesus Christ** (Ephesians 1:22-23). The idea of exalting some weak, fallible man

as the head or spiritual leader of the Lord's church is obscene. Only the most misguided and arrogant of men would dare usurp such a position.

On the local level, God has ordained that each local congregation be overseen by *qualified men*, with deacons, preachers, teachers, and members working and worshipping under their oversight. There are three Greek terms used to describe these men and these terms are translated by six English words. The term "*episcopos*" is translated "bishops" and "overseers." The term "*presbuteros*" is translated "presbyter" and "elder." The term "*poiman*" is translated "pastor" and "shepherd."

These words are not religious titles, but simply terms God chose to describe the nature and work of these men. All of these terms apply to the same men and are used interchangeably in the Bible. For instance, in Acts 20:17, Paul called for the "elders" of the church at Ephesus, but then referred to them as "overseers" in verse 28. In writing to Titus, Paul referred to these men as "elders," in verse 5, but "bishops" in verse 7.

Certain qualifications must be met before men can function as elders, bishops, or pastors over the local church. These qualifications are set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These traits are not optional. Modifying God's way to coincide with some denominational peculiarity will be accounted for at the judgment bar of God.

Only a "plurality" of men can function as overseers or pastors of the local church. Acts 14:23 speaks of "elders" of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Paul spoke of the "bishops" of the church at Philippi (Philippians 1:1). Timothy was to aid in the appointing of "elders" in every city (Titus 1:5).

Denominationalism is permeated with the "one-man pastor system." The New Testament portrayal of human leadership in the church, from start to finish, is never of "the elder," "the bishop," or "the pastor." Rather, a plurality is always shown in the texts. The "one man pastor arrangement" is purely human in its origin. It is man's system, not God's. Man has repudiated God's system and installed his own.

One of the best descriptions of man's general attitude is set forth in Judges 2:19: "*They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.*" The "one man pastor system" is just one of many examples of man's rejection of God's way and his stubborn insistence on his own way.

YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS

Wayne Barrier

JESUS IS DESCRIBED AS the master teacher. The Gospel is spread by teachers today. Church leaders are the product of good teachers. Christians grow to maturity with the help of good teachers. The church needs more good teachers.

The Hebrews writer states in Hebrews 5:12, *"For by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food."*

As in the first century, many today who could and should be teachers have failed to develop properly. Instead of teaching others, they have to require the time and attention of qualified teachers for themselves.

Time is spent teaching first principles to the same person over and over again, while the untaught move toward eternity without the benefit of any teaching. The Hebrews writer further states in Hebrews 5:13,14: *"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* It is each individual's responsibility to study, feeding upon God's Word, so that growth and development occur.

Failure to grow and become a knowledgeable teacher can result in spiritual death. We read in Hebrews 6:4-6, *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame."*

God wants us to be saved, and to help save others; but He demands that we do our part. Hebrews 6:11,12 states, *"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."*

Are you a teacher? Should you be teaching others instead of requiring that someone teach you? How long have you been a Christian? How much do you study God's Word to obtain spiritual food for growth?

BUILDERS FOR ETERNITY

W. Douglass Harris

GOD HAS GRANTED TO us a little space in this thing called time. This space we call life. It is only a short interval between two eternities. Life is but a dressing room, as it were, in which to prepare for eternity. If we could only realize how important this interval is and that we pass this way only once, how careful we would be about the character that we are building! Day by day we shape our characters for eternal misery or eternal bliss. We have to make the choice while we are here—it cannot be made after death (Hebrews 9:27). Christ described the alternatives as building on the rock or on the sand (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46-49). Christ is the rock on which we must build our spiritual houses, if we expect them to stand the test of judgment (Matthew 16:18; Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11). How do we build on Christ?

First, we must **dig deep and build on the right foundation** (Luke 6:48). We must dig through **the doctrines of men** (Matthew 15:9), **denominationalism** (John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10), **human creeds as guide books** (2 Timothy 3:16,17), **human names in religion** (Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 4:11), **additions, subtractions, and substitutions to God's Word** (2 John 9-11), and **the concept that morality alone is sufficient**. Cornelius was a morally-good man, but that was not enough. Some may have to dig through all these things; others may not, but the digging **MUST** be done. No structure is more secure than its foundation, so in building our spiritual house we must dig until we build on the Rock of Ages.

Second, **How do we build on Christ?** We build on Christ when we do the following: (1) Build on the teaching of Christ and His apostles (Matthew 7:23; 16:18; Galatians 1:6-9); (2) Adhere to the unity enjoined by Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10); (3) Respect the Bible as the all-sufficient guide in religion (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3); (4) Recognize the God-given designations for the church, its officers, members, and head (Romans 16:16; Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; Philippians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22,23); (5) Observe strict obedience to God's Word (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 22:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9). This would include the conditions with which man **MUST** comply in becoming a Christian, as well as worshipping God as commanded, and living the life that God's Word authorizes; (6) Build on the divine plan of salvation, the

church revealed in the New Testament, and the divine system of worship authorized in the New Testament.

CONCLUSION: Too much care cannot be given to building a spiritual structure that will guarantee our eternal salvation. Striking are the words Jesus used to describe the fall of the foolish man's house: "*And the ruin of that house was great*" (Luke 6:49). In God's sight the fall of one immortal soul is a thought full of unspeakable sorrow and tragedy. How supremely important it is that we build our spiritual houses so that they will stand when the worlds are on fire!

*Isn't it strange that princes and kings,
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
And common folks like you and me,
Are builders for eternity?*

*To each is given a book of rules,
A shapeless mass and a bag of tools,
And each must make ere life has flown
A stumbling block or a stepping-stone.*

— R. L. Sharpe

You Are Valuable

Clarence DeLoach

"...what will a man give in exchange for his soul..." (Mark 8:37).

SADLY, MANY PEOPLE HAVE no sense of personal worth. There is no self-esteem, and therefore no self-respect.

There is a sense of self-worth that is wrong—it leads to pride, arrogance and deceit. On the other hand there is a self-esteem that is right—it views worth as God sees it. Paul said for us, "*not to think of self more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly*" (Romans 12:3).

Sober thinking about self leads us to view self as God views it. You are of tremendous value to God! *He made you!* You are the crowning work of His creation. (Genesis 2:7) You are a soul and you have a body! You are not a chance accident of evolution! You are God's work of art!

And though the soul of man has been scarred and marred by sin, it still possesses infinite possibilities. God sees it for what it can become! When God reminded Paul, "*I have much people in this city*", He was saying that a city given to vice like Corinth could

become a city of saints (Acts 18:10; 1 Corinthians 1:2). God sees potential in the soul!

Sadly, many are searching here and there for some sense of value and purpose, when all along it is within themselves.

There was a man who lived at the turn of the century whose name was Russel Conwell. He founded Temple University. Conwell raised seven million dollars back when money was scarce, going across the country giving one speech. It is reported that he gave that speech six thousand times. He called it “**Acres of Diamonds**”. He told of a man who lived on a farm in Africa. Seeing how many were coming to Africa and striking it rich in diamonds, he decided to sell his farm, and strike out in search of his fortune. He searched long and diligently, but never found what he was looking for. Finally in desperation he threw himself in a river and drowned.

But, the man who had bought his farm was crossing a stream one day and noticed a large and unusual rock. He picked it up and upon examination it proved to be a large and valuable diamond. More extensive searching revealed that the farm he had bought contained one of the largest diamond deposits in all of Africa.

The thrust of this true story is evident: **the farm which the man sold to finance his search for diamonds was itself acres of diamonds!**

You don't have to search far and wide to find value! Your soul is that diamond! And you hold that priceless possession in your hands! Your soul is worth more than all the world! Don't sell it, and don't throw it away.

Understanding Self

Dayton Keesee

WHAT A PROFOUND MESSAGE Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:23—“*May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Paul introduces us to the second coming of Christ, relates us as readers to the Lord's return, pleads for an unblemished, blameless lifestyle, and summarizes the make-up of man! Note that Paul identifies each person as body, soul, and spirit.

What do the three parts—body, soul, and spirit—involve? As to their functions: one's body is his acting power, his soul is his will power, and his spirit is his knowing power. God's Word establishes these conclusions.

We learn from 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we will be judged concerning the deeds *done in the body*. The body is our acting power.

The spirit is our knowing power. Paul wrote, “*For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him?*” (1 Corinthians 2:11). We usually think of the brain as our source of knowledge. However, the brain is just the tool through which the spirit in man functions. For example, if you cut off one’s air passages, the brain and the rest of the body would still be there, but that body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). Also, alcohol or an accident may cause a brain to be injured or reduced in function. The spirit’s tool is damaged. That explains why some people who “know better” do strange things. The spirit’s physical tool is not functioning properly.

Another thing that may keep the spirit from functioning properly is our soul, or will power. Read carefully Hebrews 4:12, which states that the Word of God can divide between the soul and spirit, and it is quick “*to discern the thoughts (our knowing power) and intents (our will or deciding power) of the heart.*” This principle is as basic as the oft-heard statement, “I *knew* better than that.” Our soul (will power) just decided something different from our spirit (knowing power). Thus, God’s Word divides between what we know and what we decide, determining if we have sinned or not sinned (James 4:17).

Note Matthew 10:28, where Jesus urges us to fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell. People who go to hell will have lost the chance to obey or decide about obeying (lost will power). The rich man, after death, could not cross over the gulf that had been fixed (Luke 16:19-26). However, note that the rich man still had his “knowing power” after death. He could still remember (verse 25).

While body and soul may be destroyed, nowhere does the Bible teach that the spirit will be destroyed. Your spirit and my spirit are going to live somewhere forever and ever! What a sobering thought! You see, our spirits did not come from our earthly mothers and fathers. Our spirits came from God (Hebrews 12:9; Zechariah 12:1), and will return to God, who will determine where we will spend eternity (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 25:31-46, especially verse 46).

All of this survey explains why Paul longed for his brethren at Thessalonica—body, soul, and spirit—to be preserved blameless at the coming of Christ. Christ can give us an immortal body (1 Corinthians 15:50-58), so that submissive **souls** who willed to do

the Lord's will (Hebrews 5:8,9), can, by their **spirits**, come to know God and Christ, who truly grant to us eternal life (John 17:3). Are you going to be preserved body, soul, and spirit when Christ returns?

What Is The Source Of Happiness?

G.F. Raines

ALL OF US DESIRE to have as much happiness as this life can afford. But only a comparatively few people are really happy. Why are so many people unhappy? The great burden of unhappiness which mankind is struggling with is traceable to the fact that only a comparatively few people are familiar with the source of true happiness.

Pleasure is not the source of happiness. Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, president of the Austrian Medical Society of Psychotherapy, and professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Vienna, said: "When we set up pleasure as the whole meaning of life, we insure that in the final analysis life shall inevitably seem meaningless" (*The National Observer*, July 12, 1965, p. 22).

Money is not the source of happiness. King Solomon, the son of David, said: "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity*" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

The source of happiness is peace of mind, and the source of peace is a clean conscience, which is the result of obedience to the commandments of God.

Isaiah, the prince of prophets, says: "*And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever*" (Isaiah 32: 17). "*But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*" (Isaiah 57:20,21).

Peter says: "*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*" (1 Peter 3:10-12).

PROGRAMMED TO DO EVIL

Maxie B. Boren

AHAZIAH, THE SON OF Jehoram, was the 6th king of Judah during the days of the divided kingdom. The Bible tells us that during his short reign, *"he did evil in the sight of the Lord ..."* (2 Chronicles 22:4). Tragically, he had been "programmed" to do so, and by his own mother, of all people! The sacred record tells us *"his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly"* (verse 3)!

And who was the mother of Ahaziah? She was Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab (7th king of the Northern kingdom) and his infamous wife, Jezebel. Ahab, of course, was the son of Omri, the very wicked king that reigned before him. So, Athaliah was Omri's granddaughter. (Read 1 Kings 16:16-33). With such a lineage of iniquity, it is no wonder that Ahaziah did evil, especially with his wicked mother (see 2 Chronicles 24:7) tutoring him.

What a contrast **Athaliah** is to such great mothers of the Bible as **Jochebed**, the mother of Moses (read Exodus 2:1-10; 6:20), **Hannah**, the mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1), **Elizabeth**, the mother of John, **Mary**, the mother of Jesus (see Luke 1:5-80; 2:4-40), and **Lois** and **Eunice**, the grandmother and mother of Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). There can be no doubt concerning the tremendous influence that a mother has with her children!

KING SAUL

Roy Beasley

KING SAUL WAS THE first king of Israel. He reigned for forty years. He is described as being a head taller than other men of Israel. At first he was humble and submissive to the will of God. He was reluctant to be thrust into such a position. When the day came for him to be anointed, they had trouble finding him. He had hidden himself among the baggage. He then went back to his work. When the first crisis arose they had to go out into the field to find him.

But, Saul changed. In time he became a pretty good king, as far as the world's standards were concerned. On-the-job training paid off. He got the hang of it. He liked being king. God was on his side and blessed him. He was prosperous. It was better than farming. He became a military genius. He won some important victories. He was considered a national hero. He became very popular. His name

was a household word. His approval rating continued to rise. Saul became proud and arrogant.

On one occasion God commanded Saul to go out and destroy the Amalekites. He was to destroy them all. He was also to destroy all their flocks and herds.

The Amalekites were to be destroyed because of the harm they had done to the children of Israel during the time they were in the wilderness. On one occasion while the children of Israel were moving from one place to another the Amalekites had attacked. The way that they traveled was in a long column. The soldiers were up front. Then came the priests who bore the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle. Away behind came the women and children and the old people.

The Amalekites waited in ambush. They waited until the main column including the soldiers had passed. Then they attacked the rear column, consisting of the women and children and the old people. They killed as many as they could before the soldiers could come to their rescue. They then ran away. Moses wanted to go in pursuit right then, but God said, "No". They would be punished later. That is the reason why God had commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites.

Saul marched his army out against the Amalekites. He fought against them and destroyed all of them except for Agag. He destroyed all their flocks and herds except just a few, which he brought back with him.

Agag was a title, like Pharaoh. He was the king of the Amalekites. It was customary for the victorious king to return home displaying the spoils of battle. If possible, he would bring back the king or leader of the opposing army. Everything was done to humiliate the enemy. He would be stripped naked. A chain would be placed around his neck. He would sometimes be displayed in a cage like a wild animal. He would be cursed and spit upon.

This was why Saul brought him back. But, this was not what God had told him to do. God had said that he was to destroy all the Amalekites. He failed to do that.

Samuel, the prophet, went out to meet Saul. No doubt Saul was expecting congratulations from this spiritual leader. He said to Samuel: "I have done what God said." "I have destroyed the Amalekites." I can imagine that Samuel must have paused for a minute and looked him squarely in the eye. It must have made Saul quite uncomfortable. Then he said to Saul: *"What is the meaning the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle?"* In other

words, "Where did all these cattle come from?" Saul said, "Oh, it's the people. The people wanted to bring these back to offer as sacrifice." Then Samuel replied: "*To obey is better than sacrifice and to harken, than the fat of rams.*" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Because of this sin Saul lost his throne. Not long afterwards, his sons were killed in battle and he died a suicide on the bloody slopes of Mt. Gilboah. He made the mistake of partial obedience. He did only a part of what God commanded.

That is the mistake that many make today—*partial obedience*. But, God has always required *absolute and complete obedience to His will*.

Christ in the New Testament

IN MATTHEW HE IS the king of the Jews. In *Mark* He is the servant of God. In *Luke* He is the perfect son of man. In *John* He is the Son of God.

In *Acts* he is the ascended Lord.

In *Romans* He is our righteousness. In *1 Corinthians* He is the first fruits from the dead. In *2 Corinthians* He is made sin for us. In *Galatians* He is the end of the Law. In *Ephesians* He is our armor. In *Philippians* He is the supplier of every need. In *Colossians* He is the pre-eminent one. In *1 Thessalonians* He is the returning Lord. In *2 Thessalonians* He is the world's merciful judge. In *1 Timothy* He is our mediator. In *2 Timothy* He is the bestower of crowns. In *Titus* He is our great God and Savior. In *Philemon* He is the Father's partner.

In *Hebrews* He is the rest of faith and fulfiller of types. In *James* He is the giver of wisdom. In *1 Peter* He is the theme of the Old Testament prophecy. In *2 Peter* He is the long-suffering Savior. In *1 John* He is the word of Life. In *2 John* He is the target of the anti-Christ. In *3 John* He is the personification of truth. In *Jude* He is the believer's hope.

In *Revelation* he is the victorious Lamb.

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