

THE DAY OF YOUR DEATH

Hebrews 9:27 tells us, “*And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.*” In Ecclesiastes 3:2 Solomon says that there is “*a time to die*”. The only way to escape this appointment is to be among those who will still be alive when Jesus comes to judge the world. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Surely you have noticed that previous generations have come and gone. They lived their lives, their opportunities are now gone. Don’t waste yours.

WHEN WILL IT BE?

When will the day of your death come? In Genesis 27:2 we read, “*I know not the day of my death.*” Life is so uncertain that none of us knows for sure when our time will come. “*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*” (Proverbs 27:1). What if it occurred today? Are you prepared for eternity?

WHAT KIND OF DAY WILL IT BE?

Will it be day or night? Will it be on a sunny day or a dreary day? What season of the year will it be? Will you be all alone, or will you be surrounded by loving family members? These things we simply do not know! My point is that it *will* happen, therefore we need to be ready.

WHERE WILL YOU BE?

Where will you be when death finds you? Will you be at home? At work? On vacation? At worship services? That would be highly unlikely for some, for they seldom attend! (Hebrews 10:25).

WHAT WILL WE BE DOING WHEN DEATH COMES?

Will we be engaged in sin? Wouldn’t that be terrible? (Romans 6:23). Will we be enjoying time with our family? Will we be reading the Bible or perhaps praying? Some will breathe their last after just taking God’s name in vain. Sadly, many have died in a drunken state, some in murderous wrecks, taking the lives of others. How sad!

FOCUSING ON THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER

So many people do not focus their attention upon the things in life that really matter (Luke 12:15-21; Luke 16:19-31). Oh! By the way, **IT IS NOT *WHEN YOU DIE* THAT REALLY MATTERS, BUT *HOW YOU LIVED* THAT MATTERS MOST.** How have you been living? Are you living for God? **Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ?** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).
WHAT IF TODAY WAS THE DAY OF HIS COMING OR OF YOUR DEATH?

— Nat Evans

**You have an invitation
to visit with the
CHURCH OF CHRIST
in your area.**

- ☆ **When and where was the first congregation of churches of Christ begun?**
(Isaiah 2:2,3; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4; Mark 9:1.)
- ☆ **What or who is its founder and foundation? *Christ.*** (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18.)
- ☆ **By what name is the church called?**
(Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:15.)
- ☆ **What are its members called?**
(Acts 9:13,14; 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.)
- ☆ **How is one forgiven, to become a part of Christ's church (family)?**
Faith, repentance, baptism into Christ.
(Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4; Hebrews 5:8,9; Acts 8:27-40)
- ☆ **How is it organized?** (Ephesians 1:22,23; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-12.)
- ☆ **How does it worship? *In spirit and in truth.*** (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2.)

Where Has God Placed Baptism in the Plan of Salvation?

In the following diagram we see that God has placed baptism as the last human response for attaining “salvation from sin”.

The Word of God teaches that we are to “*rightly divide the word of God*” (2 Timothy 2:15). When God’s word is correctly read, it gives a “Divine Pattern” that is to be followed by all men thereafter.

Since God never altered the plan revealed in the early apostolic era, the same instructions given to men then regarding the place of baptism in the plan of salvation are still operative (authorized) for all today who seek salvation from sin.

You will notice in the diagram that baptism is the last human response required by God to attain salvation from sin. I Peter 3:21 and Acts 2:39 make that fact clear to an honest investigator.

The Plan Of Salvation What Is It?

Not

- * Faith Only
(James 2:24)
- * Infant Baptism
(Ezekiel 18:20)
- * Predestination
(Acts 10:34,35)
- * Holy Spirit Baptism
(Ephesians 4:4)
- * Praying Through
(Acts 10:1-3, 11:14)

But

- * Hear the Gospel
(Romans 10:17)
- * Believe the Gospel
(John 3:16)
- * Repent of Your Sins
(Acts 2:38)
- * Confess Christ
(Romans 10:10)
- * Be Baptized into Christ
(Mark 16:16)

Have You Obeyed the Gospel?

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU
(ROMANS 16:16).



PRINCIPLES AND DIRECT COMMANDS

Byron Nichols, Editor

It's true that we don't understand everything in the Bible, but we still **can** and **must** hold to the principle that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and that it is our only authority. This principle is made clear by such Scriptures as Matthew 28:18, 2 Timothy 3:16,17, and 2 Peter 1:20,21. Adhering to and abiding by this major principle will help us to more consistently let God guide us in making our decisions and choices. In those times when we are unsure about a question, a doctrine, or a practice, we must cling to what we already know from the Scriptures that may have application to the matter under consideration.

It has often been said that "the Bible is its own best commentary." It is critically important that we realize that any part of the Bible must be understood in relationship to the overall teaching of the Bible. We see from 2 Timothy 3:16,17 that the Scriptures claim to provide for man everything that he needs for his religious instruction. The Bible cannot be what it claims to be and be self-contradictory. It cannot make conflicting pronouncements. It must agree with itself. This is one of those exceedingly important biblical principles.

The Bible Doesn't Say, "Thou Shalt Not..."

Sometimes, it is contended that the absence of a specific command in the Bible that either prescribes or prohibits something gives us the liberty to deal with that matter in whatever way we choose – but the absence of a specific prohibition in the Bible never automatically allows an action. For example:

(1) Where does the Bible ever say, "Thou shalt not engage in drug abuse"? It doesn't ever mention drug abuse, but it does condemn such a practice — through biblical principles. For example, please read carefully those fundamental principles that are noted at the conclusion below.

(2) Where is the Bible verse that says, "Thou shalt not use cookies and milk at the Lord's Supper"? No such verse can be found in the Bible,

can it? However, the absence of a direct condemnation of such in no way excuses or authorizes such a practice. The Lord's specification of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine that He wanted to be used automatically eliminates the need for any "Thou shalt not's" with respect to any other proposed elements.

Any number of other examples could be given, but again, the absence of such commands does not mean that these matters are totally ignored by Scripture. Any time that the Bible tells us what to do, it inherently also tells us what not to do. Anything that is inconsistent with a biblical instruction regarding what to do cannot be acceptable to God.

Often, prohibitions and positive commands are covered by broad principles, such as what we call "The Golden Rule" in Matthew 7:12, wherein the Lord Jesus said, "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" It wouldn't take any of us very long to enumerate several situations where this principle of behavior would most definitely be applicable. Other such broad principles are found in the Bible, principles with a host of applications, but without a detailed list. The Lord expects His people to use common sense in making appropriate use of these general principles.

We must realize that the *principles* contained in the Bible reveal *much more* of what God deems as right or wrong than the *direct commands* that are recorded in the Bible. For the Bible to contain a special, direct command governing everything that is either good or evil would require a volume so large that it would be difficult to even carry such a Bible!

Insisting on the citing of a specific verse that explicitly condemns something that we want to do is sometimes an effort to get freedom to do what we already know is questioned by many and is controversial in nature, but what we may very well plan to do regardless. This kind of thinking is somewhat reminiscent of the thinking and actions exhibited by some toward Jesus. Let's look at just three such instances:

(1) Luke 11:14,15 – (*the seeking of another sign*)

"And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven" (emphasis added). Please notice that to some people only *one miracle* is insufficient as proof of identity, power, or authority.

(2) John 6:1-14,22-30 – (*immediately after witnessing Christ's miracle of feeding 5,000*) **6:30** – "*Therefore they said to Him, 'What sign will*

*You perform then, **that we may see it and believe You?** What **work** will You do?’” (emphasis added). It seems obvious that it would not have made any difference in those folks’ obedience had Jesus performed several more miracles. Their minds were already made up.*

(3) Luke 16:19-31 – *(the parable of the rich man and Lazarus)*

The rich man and Lazarus were dead, and the rich man implored Abraham to send Lazarus to testify to his living brothers so that they could escape the place of torment. Notice verses 29-31: “*Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, **neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead**’” (emphasis added).*

The presence of a direct command or example doesn’t always make much more of an impact on us than additional signs would have made on those who witnessed the miracles of Jesus or might have heard from the dead. If we refuse to follow basic Bible principles, we will very possibly also ignore any direct commands as well.

A look again at just a few of the basic fundamental principles in the Bible that are relative to Christian behavior should be helpful.

1 Thessalonians 5:21,22 – “*Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*”

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 – “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*”

Ephesians 5:11 – “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*”

Ephesians 4:27 – “*...neither give place to the devil.*”

Philippians 1:9,10 – “*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.*”

1 Corinthians 10:31 – “*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*”

In any quest for a loophole in an effort to do anything that is not clearly approved by God, we should also give great consideration to the consequence of our example and influence as a Christian. Read carefully Matthew 5:16 and 18:6.

It would behoove us all to be more aware of and obedient to both the **COMMANDS** and **PRINCIPLES** contained in God’s Word. †



Another Look at Faith Only

Jerry Bates, Associate Editor

A common refrain in the “Christian” world is that we are saved by faith alone. Many verses are set forth in an effort to scripturally prove this proposition, one of which is the golden text of the Bible, John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Since faith is the only thing mentioned in that verse, the conclusion is often reached that faith is the only thing that is essential to salvation. Proponents of such a doctrine will often hasten to add that “while Christians should and most will go on to live good lives of obedience to God, those things are not absolutely essential, and one is saved before he or she does even one action in service to God. All one must do is believe in Jesus as your Savior and invite Him to enter your heart as your Lord and Savior. One is saved at that point before anything is done.”

No one would deny that faith is essential, for without faith nothing else would accomplish anything. However, one is saved **not** at the point of faith, but at the point at which faith is put into practice. Those, like myself, who insist that more is required assert that in Scripture, the part is often used in reference to the whole. In the case of John 3:16, belief would include the whole plan of salvation that is necessary for man to be saved. This would incorporate repentance, confession and baptism. Repentance is not mentioned either, yet for some reason, few people would deny that repentance, or a complete change of mind and life, is essential. However, many refuse to admit that baptism is essential as well. The first action

required, other than repentance, is baptism. In baptism, we are born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3). We are buried in the watery grave and rise to begin to live a new life, just as Christ was buried and rose again on the third day (Romans 6:3-5).

I believe there is one other verse that needs to be mentioned in this connection. This is the last verse of John 3 (v. 36). “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does **not obey** (emphasis mine) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him*” (NASB). Notice that the first phrase clearly affirms that faith is essential for one to be saved, and no one would deny that. However, now observe the second phrase. This phrase says the exact opposite of the first phrase, except that different words are used. One might think that John would simply use the negative form for the word belief, but he does not do that. Instead, he uses the word for unbelief that includes the idea of disobedience. As the noted commentator, F. F. Bruce states, “‘Disobey’ is used here as the antithesis to *pisteuo* (believe).” If *pisteuo* did not include obedience, and if Biblical belief and obedience were not virtually synonymous, John could not have made that comparison. This same word is sometimes translated as disobedience in other verses as well. For example, notice Romans 2:8, “*but to those who are selfishly ambitious and **do not obey** the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*” Notice another example: Romans 10:21: “*But as for Israel, He says, ‘All the day long I have stretched out My hands to **disobedient** and obstinate people.’*”

By comparing these verses, we can see that belief means the same as obey, and if we refuse to obey, it is the same as unbelief. Thus, by inspiration, John tells us that biblical belief includes obedience. This clearly illustrates that in Scripture the faith that saves is a faith that obeys. Therefore, we are not saved by faith alone, but by a faith that exhibits itself in action. Until it is put into practice it is nothing more than a dead faith (James 2:20). This is not teaching a *works* salvation. The basis of our salvation continues to be our faith in Christ Jesus and His sacrificial death on the cross, but that faith includes living a life in service to Him. The idea that a person might somehow be saved without that life of service is just as foreign to Scripture as asserting that one can be saved without faith itself. One cannot do one without the other. Do not be misled into thinking that obedience is somehow optional. †

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Accepting the Supreme Power

Michael L. King

Man does not struggle with the fact that God has power over inanimate things or non-living things as rocks, atoms, seasons, rain, or even the hairs on our head. The real challenge is believing that God also controls our actions with our uncommon likeness to the inanimate. The term “sovereign” is used in reference to God. The expression has to do with God enjoying full autonomy (right to self-rule), allowing no rival. God is not *one* of the sovereign, but He is the *only* Sovereign. One of a kind is our God in that there is no other who has limitless, unchangable, eternal, and complete power over creation. We may find this concept complex and difficult, our intellect railing against it, but our salvation is dependent upon it.

The term “sovereign” does not appear in the Scripture, but is implied by expressions of likeness, particularly in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Daniel, in speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, said, “. . . *till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses*” (Daniel 4:25). We are to know and observe that “. . . *the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation*” (Jeremiah 10:10). More contemporary to the incarnation of Christ and the establishment of the church, Paul exalted God to Timothy as he wrote, “*To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever*” (1 Timothy 1:17).

There is a kinship with the sovereignty of God and His “omnipotence”. This big word simply means “all potent” or “all powerful”. We carelessly use words that make “all-ness statements”, implying that there are no exclusions. We do so with exaggeration to stress something that is extreme. We use expressions like, “Every time I fix a nice hot meal you are late getting home from work!” The perturbed housewife is simply employing this expression to say that there are “many” times that this occurs. When we speak of God with the use of the terms “all” and “every”, there are *no exceptions*. When we say that God knows everything (omniscience), there is not a thing hidden or unknown to God. If we

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were to say that God is everywhere (omnipresent), there is not a place but where God's presence is realized. Acknowledging the fact that God is all powerful (omnipotent) is to declare that He is limitless in His ability. God's sovereignty is not limited by time in that He is everlasting; He has no time restrictions, making Him eternal, for He commands the forces of nature, of which time is one (Matthew 5:45; 6:30). God remains the same and unchangeable.

Man is a free agent, but remains subject to God's will in terms of actions, thinking, and behavior. Jeremiah spoke of the fallacy of man's efforts compared to God's: "*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). David contrasted the choice of man to that of God when speaking of selecting paths in life: "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death*" (Proverbs 14:12). The reason for this was explained in the prophecy of Isaiah: "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,*" says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

The Word of God is the ultimate, final, and complete expression of God to man. Dare any of us to tamper with it (Galatians 1:6-9)? Jesus declared Himself to be the sovereign manifestation of God to man. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men*" (John 1:1-4). God had every intention for man to hear His Son, to learn of His sovereignty, for on the mount when Jesus was transfigured, God said, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*" (Matthew 17:5). The greatest demonstration of our love for our sovereign God is to hear His Son. It is so critical that we hear, respect, and obey the sovereign message that was once delivered (Jude 3), for it shall judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Those who trample God and His Word are to beware, for "*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed*" (2 Peter 2:9,10a). Our greatest motivation should be to show our sovereign Lord that we truly love Him (John 14:15). Keep in mind that "*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 **complete, thoroughly** equipped for **every** good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16,17, emphasis mlk). That is sovereignty at its best! †

Michael L. King preaches for the Lakeside Church of Christ in Orange Park, Florida, USA.

Who Was He?

Roger Rush

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, *“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”* They replied, *“Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”* *“But what about you?”* He asked. *“Who do you say I am?”* Simon Peter answered, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Jesus replied, *“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:13-19).

Peter offered the definitive answer. Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He had not learned this from some other man, but from God Himself. Exactly how this revelation may have been given to Peter is not stated, but the truth of our Lord’s identity was not a matter of doubt for him, nor should it be for us.

Everything we know about Jesus validates that confession. In addition to Peter’s statement, and the Lord’s own acknowledgment that He was the Son of God, we have the testimony of John the Baptist. Further, on at least three occasions the voice of God was heard from heaven proclaiming Christ as His Son. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the Messiah. And, what He did and said gave proof of who He was (John 5:30-39).

How important is His divinity? It was on the basis of Jesus’ divinity that He would build His church. The church rests on the bedrock foundation that He was the Son of God. There is no other foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). The church was not built by or upon Peter. He was given the keys to the kingdom or church, which he used to open the gates to all (Acts 2,10), but he was not the first head of the church. The church has but one Head, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). There are many sincere people who still do not understand these fundamental truths.

Make no mistake; Jesus was and is the Son of God. Believe and obey Him and enjoy endless bliss. Reject Him and there is no hope. †

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“Am I Only a God Nearby?”

Jack W. Carter

In a religious world that has largely forgotten how serious it is to teach and preach error, we can only conclude that this is another penalty for our not studying our Bibles on a consistent basis. That, perhaps coupled with the reality that we too often do not take God seriously when He speaks to us through His Word, leads to the thought that God is only a God nearby.

One Old Testament passage provides insight that we would do well to carefully regard. It was directed to the people of Jerusalem just before the city’s fall, and it indicted the false prophets of that day and those who found false hope in their false teachings. Notice:

This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise me, ‘The Lord says: You will have peace.’ And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, ‘No harm will come to you.’ But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word...? I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. ‘Am I only a God nearby,’ declares the Lord, ‘and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?’ declares the Lord. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:16-24).

God indeed disapproves of anyone misrepresenting His will. This is true of every generation. He also disapproves of people falling for such misrepresentation. Can any of us really entertain the notion that we can accept perversions of God’s Word and yet escape His wrath? Teaching error in the name of God is, and always has been, a very serious offence for both the false teacher and for those who follow false teachings. We may go a long way trying to do so, but *is He only a God nearby?* †

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The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Betty Burton Choate



Those of us who know the Scriptures realize that the story of the man we know as “Jesus Christ” began even before the creation of humanity. Revelation 13:8 declares Him to be “... *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” John 1:1 further identifies Him as “the Word”, through Whom and by Whom, and for Whom all things were created. Genesis 3:15 contains the promise that He would be “the Seed” of woman Who would destroy Satan.

The Promise of His Coming

The Old Testament Scriptures are replete with hundreds of prophecies and promises of His coming, with many details that could not have been known except through the revelation of God. How did the writer of Genesis know that the Saviour would come through the line of Abraham (Genesis 22:17,18)? Who but God could have given specific names concerning the genealogy of the Messiah, hundreds of years before his birth, saying that it would be through Isaac (Genesis 21:12), then Jacob (Numbers 24:17) then Judah (Genesis 49:10), then David (Jeremiah 23:5) that He would be born?

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His Birth

Who but God could have said that Jesus Christ would be born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23) in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Micah 5:2), that He would then be brought to Nazareth from Egypt (Matthew 2:15,23)?

We read of the great sacrifice of the Word, in laying aside the glory inherently His as One of the Godhead, becoming flesh, and living among men (Philippians 2:6,7) We wonder, “How could God limit Himself, to live within the confines of a human body, to actually be able to *grow* in wisdom as He was growing in physical stature (Luke 2:51,52), to *learn* — to practice — obedience to the One of the Godhead who became His Father (Hebrews 5:8; 1:5)? These facts are beyond our human comprehension, yet they are a part of the reality of the existence of Jesus Christ in the flesh. We read of these tremendous sacrifices, and our hearts warm with love for our Brother.

He Taught with Authority

As we study the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ, the truths that delineate our faith are developed by His teachings. From “the Sermon on the Mount” to His parables, to His prophetic and doctrinal statements, a revolutionary new way of life was introduced and exemplified to the world. Before Him, who had taught that it is better to give than to receive, or that we should love our enemies, or that going the “second mile” is good, or that sin in the heart is just as offensive to God as sin that is committed? Who else had promised that if people would seek Him and His kingdom first, God would add to their life the physical things they needed? Who, before Him, spoke with such spiritual authority that even the religious leaders who hated Him marveled at what He said (Mark 1:27)?

Since the world culture has been affected by Jesus’ teachings — making the world a more “civilized” place that is now concerned with what is called “human rights” — and since the life of every Christian is molded after the righteousness we see in the life of our Brother, we value His teachings as gifts from God.

His Miracles

To the traveler on the streets of Nazareth or Jerusalem, Jesus Christ looked like an ordinary human. There was no halo on His head, and he was not dressed in regal garments like a king. However, He taught with authority that was immediately recognized as unusual, and He backed His statements with miracles that could not be denied. *“Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and*

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power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’” His logic and responses to questions that were intended to trip Him up were so profound that “... no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore” Matthew 22:46).

Knowing that He seemed, in all physical aspects, much like other humans, Jesus made the declaration, “*Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come*” (Matthew 12:32). Why did He make such a distinction between Himself — the Word of the Godhead — and the Holy Spirit — the Power of the Godhead by Whom He was doing all of His works? Because, as He said, “... *I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me*” (John 5:36).

We read the accounts of His miracles, confirming the powerful lessons He taught as being from God. The verbal guidelines, and the miracles which only a person from God could have performed, become foundational to our life in Christ. Without the Gospel accounts, we could not be Christians.

His Death

What binds us to Christ? Of course, all of us recognize that it was in His death on the cross that He took our sins as His own, and it is in our re-enactment of that death through our own death to sin, and burial in the waters of baptism, that we are washed in His blood. Romans 6:3,4 teaches, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death ...*”

Without His death on the cross, there would be no forgiveness, no salvation for any of us.

But What about His Resurrection?

All of the points we have considered are vital, all are a part of the Messianic theme of Scripture, and all are important for us to acknowledge as evidence of His Sonship. But do we, too often, stress these facts to the point that our lesson ends at the cross?

What was the ultimate focus of the writers of the New Testament? The resurrection! They realized that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, as the Scriptures attest, then everything else written about Him is also in question. Of what use are His teachings if they went to the grave with Him? How was His death different from the crucifixion of thousands of others during that time if there was no resurrection? Peter said that the hope of our eternal inheritance

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rests on “... *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*” (1 Peter 1:3,4). Paul reasoned, “... *if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty*” (1 Corinthians 15:14). One of the requirements for salvation is that we “... *believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead*” (Romans 10:9).

Jesus, Himself, focussed on this critical test of His Sonship, to the point that the Pharisees said to Pilate, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise’” (Matthew 27:63). They realized that it was not His birth or His teachings, His miracles, and not even His death that would determine His impact on the world, but *it would be the resurrection that would convict people*. Their goal was to post guards at the tomb to prevent a fraudulent claim from being made.

Today’s world grows more atheistic every day. As Christians, we face two challenges: (1) to remain strong in our own faith, and (2) to be equipped with sufficient evidential knowledge that we can always be ready to “... *give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ...*” (1 Peter 3:15).

Evidences

A careful analysis of the Gospel accounts will show these facts:

1. The guards securing the tomb said that Jesus’ followers stole His body while they slept. If this had actually happened, the guards would have been executed for failing to hold their “prisoner”.
2. The disciples, fearful to the point of abandoning Jesus during the trial, declared openly after His resurrection that He had risen from the dead and had appeared to all of them. Within days of the event, this was preached publicly in the very city in which He had been buried, where their claims could have been challenged and proved false by their hearers, if the tomb had not actually been empty.
3. Saul, a militant enemy of Christ, saw the resurrected Lord, was converted, and went to his own death defending that testimony.
4. James, the unbelieving brother of Jesus, was convinced after His resurrection and served as a strong leader in the church in Jerusalem.
5. Jesus’ life and the details of His death are mentioned by secular historians of that time, validating the Scriptural account. A further current validation is the fact that we date our calendar to “the Year of our Lord”.
Let us not neglect to show the world the triumph of the empty tomb. †

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THE WORD OF GOD

Second, the use of tradition is condemned as the source of religious authority. Consider Mark 7:9 as Jesus says, “*all too well you reject the commandments of God, that you may keep your traditions.*” Also, consider Paul’s teaching in his letter to the Colossian church as he states in Colossians 2:8, “*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*” These traditions contradict Scripture and undermine the doctrine provided by the God’s word..

Traditions that are totally consistent with Bible teaching are mentioned and approved in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 as Paul writes, “*Therefore brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*” The apostles’ words or writings were adequate for establishing the traditions to be held. We have these writings and their inspired word today in the Bible. Other traditions, determined by historical study of the church, are not authoritative and are therefore not acceptable for doctrine.

The Bible is sufficient for our understanding of God’s will. Jesus refers to the inspiration of Scripture as He states in John 16:13, “*...when He the spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He*

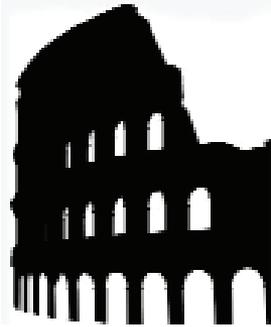
will not speak on His own authority, but what ever He hears He will speak and He will tell you things to come.” Jesus was talking to the apostles about the coming of the Holy Spirit, following His death and return to heaven. According to His promise, the Spirit Himself would provide the guidance for the church, concerning the doctrine to be taught.

Paul’s instructions to Timothy establish the basis for total trust in the Bible for our spiritual guidance. He says in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, “*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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” Also consider 2 Timothy 2:15,16 which records, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.*”

Man needs only to know, understand, and obey God, based on the clear teachings of the Bible. So-called “Christian” tradition too often is not consistent with the Bible.

What is the basis of your faith and hope? †

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Romans 5:12-23

Jerry Bates

1. Through which man did sin enter the world? How did death enter the world? (v. 12)
2. Why has death spread to all men? (v. 12)
3. Where there is no law, there is no _____. (v. 13)
4. Who did Paul say was a “type” of Christ? (v. 14)
5. How was that true?
6. What is the “gift” that came by God’s grace? (v. 15)
7. What resulted from the one offense? What resulted from the free gift? (v. 16)
8. Those who receive the grace of God and the gift of righteousness will do what through Christ? (v. 17)
9. By one man’s obedience many will be made _____. (v. 19)
10. What does the word “righteous” mean?
11. What happened when the law entered the world? (v. 20)
12. Where sin abounded, what did that do to grace? (v. 20)
13. Because the consciousness of sin increased the sense of need for God’s grace, what result should this have on man?
14. Grace reigns through _____ to eternal life through _____. (v. 21)

(See inside back cover for answers)

Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned — 13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam who is a type of Him who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses, resulted in justification. 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:12-23, New King James Version)

Note: This passage is often used in an attempt to prove the doctrine of total hereditary depravity, that is, man is born totally sinful and lost from the very beginning, based on the sinfulness of Adam. The purpose of this passage is to show how one person, Christ, could accomplish so much. Paul's main point is this: *whatever the whole human race got from Adam has been completely canceled out for the whole human race by the gracious atoning work of Jesus Christ.* We continue to suffer the consequences of Adam's sin, physical death, but not the guilt. In Christ we are transferred into the domain of righteousness, where grace abounds, and life — not death — is the eventual outcome, for those who obey Him.

Always Be Ready to Give a Defence

Travis L. Quertermous

Do you believe in God? Do you believe Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God? Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God? Do you believe that life arose as a result of God's creation and not as a result of evolution? I think it is safe to say that most Americans would answer all of these questions, "Yes."

However, suppose someone were to challenge you to explain why you believed these things. Could you show why you believe in a God you cannot see? Could you give a reason why you believe Jesus Christ arose from the dead? Are you familiar with the evidences that prove the Bible is a divine revelation, or that evolution is a false theory? Did you know God commands us to be ready to give answers to these questions? In 1 Peter 3:15, we read, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*" The phrase "ready to give a defense" comes from the Greek *pros apologia* from which we get our English word "apologetics". Apologetics is the study of Christian evidences. All of us need to equip ourselves with some basic knowledge in this area so that we might obey the command of 1 Peter 3:15.

There are many good books and resources that will acquaint us with the basics to Give a Defense of Christian evidences (Apologetics Press being one), but the Bible is still our best guide. For example, Paul gives us all the evidence we need to establish the Lord's resurrection beyond any reasonable doubt in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8: "*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*" Let us study that we might "always be ready to give a defense" of our faith in an increasingly skeptical world. †

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Plants Speak of a Creator

Owen D. Olbricht

Plants do not literally speak, but their design speaks of a Designer. The following article, “Biological Clocks Tick in Plants, Too, Scientists Discover,” by Emily Gersema, of the Associated Press, appeared in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, Friday, April. 4, 2003, p. 5A. The article discussed the amazing things plants do to survive and adapt to their environment.



Plants appear still and silent, but inside a clock is ticking. Scientists in Israel and the U.S. Agriculture Department have discovered that plants, like animals, have a 24-hour biological clock. Like the body clock that tells humans to wake up, plants have one that tells them to prepare for the sun. The plant clock is set so it goes off around the same time every morning, usually just a few hours before noon. The late morning alarm tells plants to prepare for intense sunlight, triggering processes that help the plants make food, says Autar K. Mattoo, a plant physiologist in the department’s Agricultural Research Services lab.

The clock controls an enzyme that modifies a protein called D1 ... critical for photosynthesis, the process whereby plants extract light and convert it to food. When D1 binds with phosphorus, it creates a

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modified protein found in chloroplast — a special structure in the cell that is made of carbohydrates, fat and proteins ... [which] tells the plant to adjust its metabolism so it will protect itself from extreme light.

“It cannot run away. Their roots are stuck in the soil, so they have devised and perfected processes that allow them to survive in the harshest extreme environments ... If plants are exposed to excessive ultraviolet radiation, plants produce molecules called falconoid, which act as the sunscreen,” Mattoo says.

The clock shuts off in the evening as the sun goes down. If it’s dark “and you put the plants into artificial light, they remember this clock.”

Two interesting statements by Mattoo appear in this report. (1) Plants “have devised and perfected processes that have allowed them to survive in the harshest extreme environments.” (2) “They remember this clock.” Plants have no brains. How can they devise and perfect any process without any intellect to determine their choices, and how can they remember? Without a brain, they have no means by which they can experiment and adapt until they develop the best processes for survival. They will die unless they immediately perfect protection from the harsh extremes of nature, for they cannot run in and out of severe circumstances until they have developed protection from hostile environments.

The better explanation is that an all-wise Designer built into plants a biological clock and gave them the capacity to produce enzymes that protect them from extreme, deadly conditions. Paul was correct when he wrote, “*For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*” (Romans 1:20). †

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Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day (Genesis 1:11-13).

The Great Designer

Tom J. Marshall

Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, former president of the New York Academy of Sciences, is the author of the book, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*. He argues that it is possible to demonstrate mathematically that the universe could not have happened by chance, but was designed purposefully.

Dr. Morrison points out that the earth rotates on its axis at 1,000 miles per hour. If it rotated at only 100 miles per hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as they are now and the earth would alternately burn and freeze. Vegetation would not be able to survive. Again, the sun has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is at the exact distance from the sun that it must be to get just enough heat, but not too much.

The earth is tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, and this enables us to



have our seasons. If the earth were not tilted at this angle, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, piling up continents of ice. If the moon were not at the exact distance that it is from the earth, the ocean tides would inundate the land mass completely, twice a day.

If the ocean were just a few feet deeper than it is, and the carbon dioxide and oxygen in the earth's atmosphere just a little thinner, many of the meteors which are now burned out in space would bombard us, starting fires everywhere.

Could this delicate balance have happened by chance? "Not a chance in ten million," says Dr. Morrison.

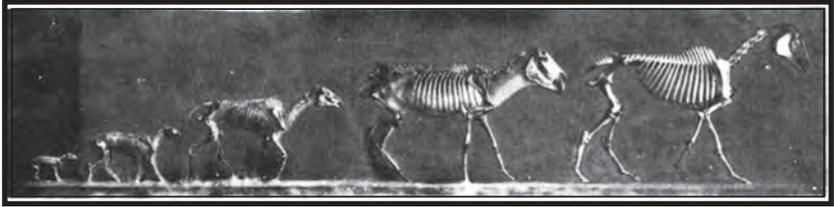
Design demands a designer. †

**"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork..."
(Psalm 19:1).**

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Can a Christian Still Be an Evolutionist?

Brad Harrub



If one were to believe everything that the scientific community has offered regarding man's origins, we would find that very few theories include acts by a supernatural Creator. In fact, scientists are quick to point out that the universe took billions of years to form, and thus it would be absurd to believe that it was created in just six days. For instance, consider what Thomas Hayden wrote when he added another "certainty" of life, besides taxes and death. His effort to shore up the ever-faltering theory of evolution was the cover story of the July 29, 2002 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*. In explaining "how evolution works, and why it matters more than ever," Hayden stated, "It's an everyday phenomenon, a fundamental fact of biology as real as hunger and as unavoidable as death" (2002, 133-134; 43).

Sadly, this type of grandstanding and propagandizing in the media occurs all too often, and people by the millions accept it as the "final word" on the subject — without any real knowledge as to what the evidence truly reveals. Even within the church, Christians often subconsciously find themselves favoring science over the Bible. We have forgotten the truth on the matter, which can be summed up simply with the first ten words that appear in the Bible: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1). If this is not true, then every word that follows should be called into question.

Because of the prevailing idea of an ancient Cosmos, many people have tried to find ways to fit evolution and its billions-of-years time frame into the biblical account of creation.

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In essence, they still espouse belief in God and the Bible, but they also pledge a great deal of allegiance to science and the evolutionary theory. As the old adage says, they want to “have their cake and eat it, too.” Can both the Bible and evolutionary theory be true? People clinging to both the Bible and evolution are commonly known as “theistic evolutionists”. “Theistic” comes from the Greek *theos*, which means “God”. Thus, theistic evolutionists believe God does exist, but they also hold to the theory of evolution as true. They rationalize their beliefs by stating that “Yes, God created the heavens and the earth,” but then He used (or allowed) evolutionary processes to produce the universe we see today.

Thus, “Bible believers” find themselves in the awkward position of compromising the opening chapters of the Bible. If Genesis 1-11 is tossed aside as merely a mythological story, then we must toss out the entire Bible, because the one major theme that is taught throughout the Bible is redemption. Man’s relationship with God started at the pinnacle of creation week in the Garden, and degenerated from there. Christians need to be fully aware that theistic evolution teaches that man started out at the bottom and worked his way to the top (via the old amoeba-to-man story). Therefore, either man started

at the top and fell, as the Bible indicates, or he started at the bottom and rose to the top, as evolution indicates. Both cannot be correct! The prophets long ago declared the fall of humans, and the resulting need for a Savior. Scripture indicates that this was the reason for Christ’s death — to bring men back into a covenant relationship with God. If men truly did not fall as described in the creation account, then why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to this planet and suffer a cruel death on the cross?

Additionally, consider the following: Surely, evolution will not have to reverse itself and concede that it reached its zenith with the birth of the Christ child a long, long time ago. Surely, this colossal system will not have to concede that it is less able now to produce a greater than Jesus than it did produce two thousand years ago. If evolution is not now able to produce a greater than Jesus, then it seems the system has ceased to be evolution and has become devolution, at least in one sense (Taylor, 1974). Today, this theory appears more like “devilution” than devolution.

As long as we are tossing aside Scripture, we might as well get out our scissors and cut out all references to the creation, starting with the Gospel accounts — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus Christ Himself

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made reference to the creation when He stated in Matthew 19:4; *“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female ...”* These words indicate that Adam and Eve had been on the Earth *“from the beginning of creation”* (Mark 10:6). Of course, we also would have to throw out John, because the first few verses of Chapter One review the beginning and creation. Other Scriptures such as Acts 4:24, Acts 17:25, Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:16, 1 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 1:2, 1 Peter 4:19, and Revelation 4:11 also would be called into question if the creation account is merely a nice story and not historically accurate. As a matter of fact, the only books that do not refer to the creation in some form are the books of Jude, Philemon, and 2 and 3 John!

Additionally, if we do not accept that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days, then we are making Jesus Christ — our Savior — a liar. Jesus stated: *“But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them”* (Mark 10:6), affirming that Adam and Eve were on the earth since the beginning of creation. Paul affirmed in Romans 1:20,21 that the things God had made had been “perceived” even *“since the Creation of the world”*. According to evolutionists, man did not come into the picture until about

3-4 million years ago. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that if the Earth is supposedly 5-6 billion years old, then the last 3-4 million is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning”. Rather, it is “from the end”. Therefore, we are left with a choice: either Jesus Christ lied and the evolutionists are correct, or we can believe that the words Jesus Christ spoke are true, and therefore evolution is 100% wrong. The belief in theistic evolution allows for the Savior to be called a liar!

Ah, but you say, “Adam was just a mythological creature. We know today that man originated from a Neanderthal-type creature.” However, if this is true, why did the inspired apostle Paul pen these words: *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22), and then in reference to Christ write, *“So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit”* (1 Corinthians 15:45)? If Adam and Eve are merely mythological, does this mean that this “last Adam”, Jesus Christ, was a mythological creature as well? †

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What's In a Name?

Connor McLean and David A. Sargent

In 1958, a New York City father named Robert Lane decided to call his baby son “Winner”. The Lanes, who lived in a housing project in Harlem, already had several children, each with a fairly typical name. However, Robert Lane apparently had a special feeling about this boy. “Winner Lane.” How could he fail with a name like that?

Three years later, the Lanes had another baby boy, their seventh and last child. For reasons that no one can quite pin down today, Robert decided to name this boy “Loser”. Robert wasn’t unhappy about the new baby; he just seemed to get a kick out of the name. First a Winner, now a Loser. Yet, if Winner Lane could hardly be expected to fail, could Loser Lane possibly succeed?

Loser Lane did, in fact, succeed. He went to prep school on a scholarship, graduated from Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, and joined the New York Police Department, where he made detective and, eventually, sergeant. Although he never hid his name, many people were uncomfort-

able using it. To his police colleagues today, he is known as “Lou.”

As for his brother, the most noteworthy achievement of Winner Lane, now in his late 40s, is the sheer length of his criminal record: more than 30 arrests for burglary, domestic violence, trespassing, resisting arrest, and other mayhem.

Names can reveal one’s character and even shape it. Names can provide a goal for which a person may strive to achieve. Or, one can fail to live up to a name that he has been given.

What’s in a name? There is CONVICTION in a name that we all wear due to our wrong choices: SINNER. *“For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

What’s in a name? There is SALVATION in the name of JESUS. *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). When we respond in trusting obedience,

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believing in Him (Acts 16:30,31), turning from our sins in **repentance** (2 Corinthians 7:9,10), **confessing** His name before men (Romans 10:9,10), and being **baptized** (immersed) in His name, Jesus gives us a new name: CHRISTIAN.

Wearing the name “Christian” indicates that we have been forgiven of our sins, and it also gives us a goal for which to strive: Christ-likeness. God has promised that as a Christian walks in the light of His Word, He will continue to cleanse that one of

his sins (1 John 1:7).

What’s YOUR name? Labels can hurt; titles can reward. The name above every name is JESUS, and He wants to be your Savior so that He can give you a NEW name, a name filled with glory and honor, as well as responsibility, the name “Christian”.

Won’t YOU become a Christian today? †

Connor McLean and David A. Sargent serve the Lord as part of the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

Like Shadows

Like shadows gliding o’er the plain,
Or clouds that roll successive on,
Man’s busy generations pass,
And while we gaze, their forms are gone.

We live, we die; behold the sum
Of good or ill on life’s fair page;
Alike in God’s all-seeing eye,
The infant’s day, the patriarch’s age.

O Father, in whose mighty hand
The boundless years and ages lie,
Teach us thy boon of life to prize,
And use the moments as they fly.

— Jane Taylor

WE ARE AT WAR

Jimmy Jividen

The war we are fighting is not for physical territory or temporal power. It is a war against the devil and all of the deceit and darkness of his domain. *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). This spiritual warfare demands the greatest sacrifice and most noble courage since we are being attacked on all fronts.

There is the philosophical front that challenges reason and common sense as the means of understanding Scriptures. In its place the devil would place existentialism and its corollaries. Truth would be portrayed as relative, subjective, and personal. Universal, objective, absolute truth would be debunked. Yet, it was Jesus who said, *“Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

There is the ethical front that challenges the teachings of Jesus concerning honesty, morality, and benevolence. The devil would advocate situational ethics and let ev-

ery man do what is right in his own eyes. Might would be right. Abuse, oppression, and perversion would be unchecked, and the imaginations of men’s hearts would be only evil continually.

There is the religious front that challenges God’s revelation in the Scriptures. Satan would contradict what God has said and seek to deceive man as he did in the Garden of Eden. He would try to make the Word of God ineffective by claiming that it is so enshrouded in past cultures that it cannot apply to contemporary man. He would try to crowd the Word of God out of the mind of man by secularism.

It is time for soldiers of Christ to arise and fight. All that it takes for evil to conquer is for good men to do nothing. Paul exhorted Christians at Ephesus to: *“...take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm”* (Ephesians 6:13). †

Jimmy Jividen is an author and a preacher living in Abilene, Texas, USA.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Jim Poland

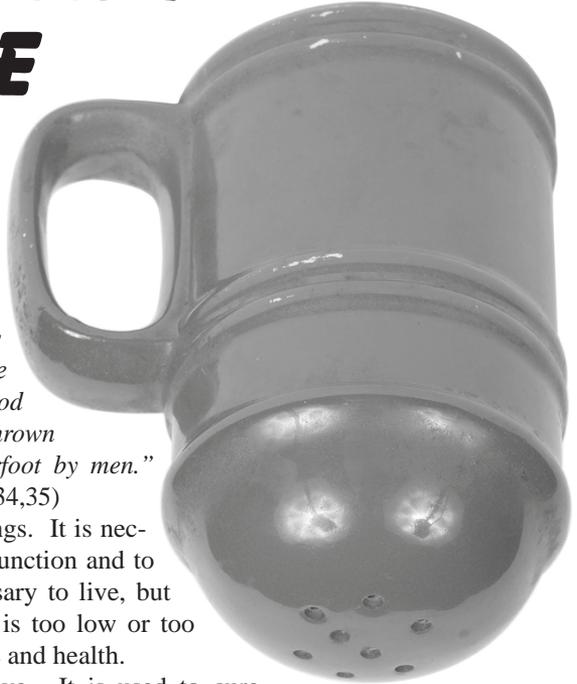
Matthew 5:13, *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”*
(Mark 9:49,50; Luke 14:34,35)

Salt does many things. It is necessary for the body to function and to be healthy. It is necessary to live, but when the sodium level is too low or too high, it is harmful to life and health.

Salt is a preservative. It is used to cure meats and vegetables. Salt is a flavoring and savoring agent. It has long been used to flavor food. Under the Law of Moses, it was required in certain offerings (Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24). Yet, salted land becomes unfruitful; captured cities were salted, doomed to destruction (Judges 9:45). It has been used as a symbolic healer (2 Kings 2).

Salt was also a symbol of a covenant. Persons who partook of salt in a meal of hospitality were considered to have entered into a covenant together. It was used to symbolize an enduring covenant with Jehovah (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5).

Salt is used as a spiritual symbol. It describes Jesus’ “disciples”, learners, and followers (Matthew 5:1,13). Hearers of Jesus, citizens of His kingdom, those with the attitudes of the beatitudes, Christians are the *“salt of the earth”* (Luke 14:34).



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Spiritual salt does that which is vital. It is the saving influence that is *in* the world, not *of* the world. Faithful Christians are to the world or human race what salt is to food, health, and life. This influence preserves from the corruption of sin, doctrinally and morally. It gives savor and flavor to make the world a better place in which to live. It prepares souls for a glorious home eternally. All with whom Christians come in contact are benefited.

How does this spiritual salt work? It proves what truth from God can do. This is shown as Christians live by the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16,17). What we teach affects the lives of those who hear (Ephesians 4:15), spreading the truth of the Gospel to every nation, showing the way to covenant with the Lord (Matthew 28:19,20). Spiritual salt produces the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). It purifies from the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

It is the responsibility of the church to point the way to salvation. It was not left to governments, social services, social planners, judges, courts, etc. to do this work. The command is **ours** to spread the Gospel (Romans 1:16). The salt must get out of the shaker.

When salt, Christians, lose their influence, nothing else will do what we have been given to do. We, then, become good for nothing. The Lord will cast us out because we are killing the growth of the kingdom. Influence is lost through lack of dedication to attendance of assemblies, through not growing spiritually in the faith (Romans 10:17), through being distracted to worldly things, through not trying to win friends and relatives to Christ. †

Jim Poland preaches for the Lord's church at Bona, Missouri, USA.

**The salt must
get out of the
salt shaker!**

THE CHURCH

Growth Vs. Gospel

Dan Winkler

As God's people, we find ourselves in competition with the world and denominational circles. The conflict is serious, for the salvation of souls and the expansion of our spiritual kingdom are at stake. We want to succeed! However, should we succeed at any cost?

A subtle danger faces us, which might be called the "growth syndrome". Without care, "Will it help us grow?" will become the criterion by which we measure success and the standard by which we live. With a pen of balance and a heart of loving concern, might we suggest some terrifying consequences of this danger.

First, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to shift our "mission". Jesus said, "*Go into all the world, and preach*

the gospel" (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). As a church, we exist to walk in the steps of Jesus who "*came to seek and save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). Without care, our mission can subtly shift from "going into all the world", to "growing before the eyes of the world". God forbid!

Second, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to weaken our "message". Again, Jesus said "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel*" (Mark 16:15). As a church, we exist to "*preach the word*" (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Without care, our message can become slanted, weakened, or even compromised out of a desire to be less offensive or controversial and more appealing to the masses for which we compete. God forbid!

Third, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to pursue an imposter "metamorphosis". Christians are to be "*transformed* (literally undergo a spiritual metamorphosis) *into the same image*" of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). As a church, our goal is to think and feel the way Jesus thought and felt (Philippians 2:5), as we attempt to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21). Without care, we can subtly become more interested in "our image" than we are in "the image of Jesus". God forbid!

Fourth, if growth is our main emphasis, we could be encouraged to

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weaken our “missionary” thrust. We are to “*go...make disciples of all the nations*” (Matthew 28:19). In Paul’s day, the Gospel “*was preached in all creation under heaven*” (Colossians 1:23). Can we say the same? Without care, we can easily become imbalanced, pressing for a strong home base, with numbers running over, to the neglect of souls elsewhere who are starving for the good news of Jesus. God forbid, for both are important!

May our hearts pulsate with a

desire for the church to do well! At the same time, may we press forward to a greater future, refusing to compromise our mission, our message, or our God-given quest to be like Jesus and to share Him with others! After all, spiritual growth is the secret to church growth. “*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily*” (Acts 16:5). †

Dan Winkler preaches for the Lord’s church in Huntingdon, Tennessee, USA.

God’s Boxes

I have in my hands two boxes,
Which God gave me to hold.
He said, “Put all your sorrows in the black box,
And all your joys in the gold.”

I heeded His words, and in the two boxes,
Both my joys and sorrows I stored,
But though the gold became heavier each day,
The black was as light as before.

With curiosity, I opened the black,
I wanted to find out why,
And I saw, in the base of the box, a hole,
Which my sorrows had fallen out by.

I showed the hole to God, and mused,
“I wonder where my sorrows could be!”
He smiled a gentle smile and said,
“My child, they’re all here with me..”

I asked God, why He gave me the boxes,
Why the gold and the black with the hole?
“My child, the gold is for you to count your blessings,
The black is for you to let go.”

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The Growth of the First Church

“...and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly” (Acts 6:7).

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The church established in Jerusalem was a growing church. The key to her growth is seen in Acts 2:42-47. The church fellowshiped, edified each other, worshiped, ministered, and evangelized.

Peter, who was present on Pentecost and knew first-hand of the growth of the church in her early days in Jerusalem, wrote a letter in his later years in which he captured how individual Christians are involved in that growth. He said, *“Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen”* (1 Peter 4:10,11).

Peter reveals:

- **That each one has received a gift.** Spiritual gifts are abilities God gives to be used in His kingdom. Each has a work to do. Not all have the same gift, but each is important.
- **The gifts are to be used to serve.** Each is a servant. Gifts are not an end in themselves. They are not possessed to bring pride or vainglory. They are to be used in service. When one possesses a servant’s heart, God will provide the gift.
- **The exercise of our gift is a matter of stewardship.** We are trustees in charge of the Master’s business.
- **Whether speaking or serving, all is to be done by the direction of the Word of God to the end that God is glorified.**

When you use the gift God has given you, **the church will grow** (Ephesians 4:16). **You** are the vital key to the increase of the body. You can help the church grow *warmer* through fellowship; *deeper* through discipleship; *stronger* through worship; *broadier* through ministry, and *larger* through evangelism.

May God give us open *eyes to see*, open *hearts to feel*, and open *hands to serve*. †

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. works with the church in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHURCH

The New Testament Church

H. M. Phillips

NOTABLE FACTS ABOUT IT

- Jesus built it (Matthew 16:18).
- The foundation is Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).
- Purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28).
- Christ head over all things to it (Ephesians 1:22).
- Scripturally called (Romans 16:13; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 11:23).
- Members are called Christians (Acts 11:26).

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

- Saved added to it (Acts 2:47).
- Must support the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).
- To remember Christ (Luke 22:19).
- To show the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- Let Christ live in members (Galatians 2:20).
- Help the needy (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- Know the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).
- To glorify God acceptably (Ephesians 3:11).
- Must fear and worship God (Acts 9:31; John 4:24).

WHY ENTER THE CHURCH

- Because Christ loved it (Ephesians 5:25).
- All the saved are in it (Acts 2:47).
- To get out of darkness (Colossians 1:13).
- To glorify God acceptably (Ephesians 3:21).
- To die in the Lord and be blessed (Revelation 14:13).
- To be caught up with and be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
- The only institution Jesus gave (Matthew 16:18).

HOW TO ENTER THE CHURCH

- Must hear the Gospel (Acts 3:22-23; Matthew 17:5).
- Believe unto righteousness (Romans 10:10).
- Repent unto life (Acts 11:18).
- Confess unto salvation (Romans 10:10).

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Be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

In Christ, in His body, the church (Colossians 1:18).

Thus reach all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

CASES OF CONVERSION

Pentecostians — Repented...Baptized (Acts 2:38).

Samaritans — Believed...Baptized (Acts 8:12).

Simon — Believed...Baptized (Acts 8:13).

Eunuch — Believed...Confessed...Baptized (Acts 8:37-38).

Saul — Baptized (Acts 9:18).

Cornelius — Baptized (Acts 10:48).

Lydia — Believed...Baptized (Acts 16:14).

Jailor — Believed... Baptized (Acts 16:31-33).

Corinthians — Believed...Baptized (Acts 18:8)

They Heard, Believed, Repented, Confessed, and were Baptized.



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WHAT IS SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM?

Where there was much water (John 3:25).

Going to the water (Acts 8:36).

Going down into the water (Acts 8:38).

Coming up out of the water (Acts 8:39).

Called a birth (John 3:5).

Represented as a burial (Romans 6:4).

Spoken of as a resurrection (Colossians 2:12).

And as a planting (Romans 6:5).

RESULTS OF BAPTISM

Sins remitted (Acts 2:38).

Gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Get into Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Get into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Have good conscience (1 Peter 3:21).

Reach all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

Remission of sins by the shed blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood of Christ shed in His death (John 19:33-34).

Baptized into His death (Romans 6:3).

Reach the shed blood in Christ in His death (Colossians 1:14).

... Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

— Romans 6:3-7

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”
(2 Thessalonians 1:7,8). †

Truth

Charles R. Rose

Truth is the most precious commodity on the market. The wise man Solomon admonished his readers to “*Buy the truth and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:23). All truth comes from God, who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), while all falsehoods come from Satan, “*who is a liar with no truth in him*” (John 8:44).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, told the people of His day, “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). Truth is more precious than gold. Honest men have searched for it, fought for it, and died for it. Truth has nothing to fear and nothing to hide. Truth will bear any honest investigation. Truth is that which we must believe and obey. Truth is that body of information by which we must live. The truth spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ is that by which mankind must someday be judged. It is as He stated, “*...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48).

Some, like Pilate, still ask, “*What is truth*” (John 18:38). Jesus still answers, “*Sanctify them through*

Thy word, Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). We know that God would “*... have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4). We also know that “*... grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (John 1:17), who is “*...the way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:6).

In our search for that body of truth that has the power to save our eternal soul and to free us from Satan’s snare, we need go no further than the Bible. When an honest man or woman hears the truth found in the Bible, one of two things will happen: that person will either obey the truth or cease to be honest. It does little good to know God’s Holy Word unless one is willing to obey it and defend it.

When Peter preached the first Gospel sermon on the first Pentecost following the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-36), those who heard and believed the message asked, “*... what shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37). Peter, speaking “*... as the Spirit gave (him) utterance*” (Acts 2:4) answered, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). About three thousand people who heard that sermon were honest within themselves. Of these people, God’s Word says, “And they that gladly received his word were baptized; and there were added unto them that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). The rest of that great multitude who heard the Gospel message preached that day ceased to be honest. They received not the Word of God and sealed their eternal fate (John 12:48), as long as they continued to reject the Gospel.

Reflecting on your own habits of acceptance of the teachings contained in the Holy Bible, would you consider yourself to be just as honest as the three thousand on Pentecost, or are you more inclined to follow the example of the rest of that crowd? “... *be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Jesus, Revelation 2:10).* †

Charles R. Rose preaches the Gospel in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

YOU SAY	GOD SAYS	BIBLE VERSES
“It’s impossible.”	All things are possible.	Luke 18:27
“I’m too tired.”	I will give you rest.	Matthew 11:28-30
“Nobody really loves me.”	I love you.	John 3:16 & John 3:34
“I can’t go on.	My grace is sufficient.	2 Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15
“I can’t figure things out.”	I will direct your steps.	Proverbs 3:5,6
“I can’t do it.”	You can do all things.	Philippians 4:13
“I’m not able.”	I am able.	2 Corinthians 9:8
“It’s not worth it.”	It will be worth it.	Roman 8:28
“I can’t forgive myself.”	I forgive you.	1 John 1:9 & Romans 8:1
“I can’t manage.”	I will supply all your needs.	Philippians 4:19
“I’m afraid.”	I have not given you a spirit of fear.	2 Timothy 1:7
“I’m always worried and frustrated.”	Cast all your cares on ME.	1 Peter 5:7
“I’m not smart enough.”	I give you wisdom.	1 Corinthians 1:30
“I feel all alone.”	I will never leave you or forsake you.	Hebrews 13:5

Grace and Obedience

Frank Chesser

Grace is unmerited favor, divinely bestowed upon sinful humanity. Man does not deserve one good thing God does for him. In spite of all the good deeds that he might perform, the term “unprofitable” is irrevocably attached to every man’s name. However, God has always demanded a response from man in cooperation with His grace. Paul describes this response as the “*obedience of faith*” (Romans 16:26).

When God foretold the judgment to befall Egypt in the death of the firstborn, His announcement was tempered with grace. He promised to spare the firstborn in every house where the blood of the lamb had been applied to the doorpost (Exodus 12:13). Israel’s obedience was essential, but it did not earn for them the favor of God in the sparing of their firstborn. Thus, submission to God, though necessary, was not the object of their trust. The object of their faith, hope, and trust for the salvation of their children, was *God* and *His grace*. It was, however, their *obedience of faith* that enabled them to appropriate the provisions of grace to their homes.

While wandering in the wilderness, Israel was plagued with serpents as punishment for their expressions of discontent (Numbers 21:4-6). Having acknowledged their sin, God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and enjoined the afflicted to look thereon for deliverance (Numbers 21:8). Was the power to heal in the brass serpent? Was looking upon the serpent an essential part of the healing process? Was it not necessary for those bitten to express their faith by complying with the condition that God had given? Did their obedience of faith cancel God’s grace and convert their gift of healing into human merit?

The power to heal, save, and bless belongs to God, and the display thereof constitutes grace in action. Man’s obedient faith is God’s means of enabling him to benefit from the opulent provisions of grace. Faith’s trust is in *divine grace*, not *human action*. Though the obedience of faith is indispensable to man’s participation in the blessings of grace, man’s trust must ever remain firmly riveted in God, and not in his act of obedience. †

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

A Miracle or Providence?

Robert Brooks

A miracle requires the supernatural power and actions of a supernatural being. Therefore, only God can do a miracle. A miracle can occur only when a natural law is suspended and the supernatural element is enacted.

The apostles of Christ were able to work miracles to prove that they were sent by Him. Peter and John were there as representatives of Christ when the lame man was healed in Acts 4. Peter was there as God's man when Dorcas was raised from being dead in Acts 9. Paul was bitten by a snake but did not get sick, as evidence that Christ was with him (Acts 28). In every miracle, whether in the Old or New Testament, the natural law was suspended while the supernatural took over.

Divine providence does not require a miracle, although God did often provide for His people through miracles. The manna and the loaves and fishes were examples of providence with the use of miracles. Divine providence is seen when God works through His natural laws to provide.

God provided for His people in Egypt by putting Joseph in a strategic

position of power and influence. He used the evil hearts of his brethren to get Joseph to Egypt, and then He used the lustful eye of Potipher's wife to further the cause. He used Pharaoh and his dreams to put Joseph in a place to interpret them, and thus advance His divine cause. Consequently, at the end, Joseph could say truthfully, "*It was all God's doing*" (Genesis 50:20), and it was all done without a direct miracle.

There is much misunderstanding today about miracles. Some refer to the birth of a child as a miracle. However, a baby's birth is the result of God's natural law working perfectly to propagate human life on the earth, just as He planned. Others refer to the sunrise and sunset as miracles but this, again, is the working of God's natural law that He set into motion at the beginning of the world (Genesis 1:14-18).

We must never forget that whether by miracles or the working of His power through natural law, it is always God who provides. We believe that "*every good and perfect gift is from the Father who giveth to all liberally and without prejudice*"

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(James 1:17). Whether our bread comes down from heaven, as did the manna, or comes from wheat seed sown in the ground and processed into bread, it comes from God — it is still the providence of God.

Whether our water comes from a rock in a desert place, or we pump it from a well in the ground, or draw it from a river, our water is still the result of divine providence.

No matter how we are blessed with our everyday needs, we should always give God thanks. After all, none of us can make a seed or create a single drop of water. †

Robert Brooks is a Gospel preacher living in Hogansville, Georgia, USA.

Shirley Goodnest and Marcy

A mom was concerned about her kindergarten son walking to school. He didn't want his mother to walk with him. She wanted to give him the feeling that he had some independence but yet know that he was safe. So she had an idea on how to handle it.

She asked a neighbor if she would please follow him to school in the mornings, staying at a distance, so he probably wouldn't notice her. She said that since she was up early with her toddler anyway, it would be a good way for them to get some exercise as well, so she agreed.

The next school day, the neighbor and her little girl set out following behind Timmy as he walked to school with another neighbor girl he knew. She did this for the whole week. As the two walked and chatted, kicking stones and twigs, Timmy's little friend noticed the same lady was following them as she seemed to do every day all week.

Finally she said to Timmy, "Have you noticed that lady following us to school all week? Do you know her?"

Timmy nonchalantly replied, "Yeah, I know who she is."

The little girl said, "Well, who is she?"

"That's just Shirley Goodnest," Timmy replied, "and her daughter Marcy."

"Shirley Goodnest? Who is she and why is she following us?"

"Well," Timmy explained, "every night my Mom makes me say the 23rd Psalm with my prayers, 'cuz she worries about me so much. And in the Psalm, it says, 'Shirley Goodnest and Marcy shall follow me all the days of my life', so I guess I'll just have to get used to it!"

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY



People who stand up for the Truth are sometimes persecuted for doing so. That's why so few are willing to speak the Truth in the face of falsehood. It is easier to lay low and just tolerate evil behavior, false teachings, or blatant lies.

However, there are some who are so devoted to the Truth that they will risk themselves to support it. John the Baptist told Herod Antipas, "*It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife*" (Mark 6:19). He was beheaded for saying it. Stephen said to the Jewish Sanhedrin, "*You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers; you always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him – you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it*" (Acts 7:51-53). He was stoned to death for saying it. Of course, when the high priest asked Jesus, "*Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?*" Jesus answered, "*I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven*" (Mark 14:61,62). Jesus spoke the Truth, and they crucified Him for it.

The truth is not a personal belief meant to be secreted away in our hearts, only to be revealed in friendly surroundings among people of like mind. The Truth is to be spoken and applied to life. Truth is to be advanced against falsehood at all times, in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). When speaking the Truth results in persecution, we must not grow quiet, but must then speak the Truth even more certainly.

The world is full of lies. Who will be courageous and speak the Truth no matter what? God help us, I hope we all will. †

Rick Cunningham preaches for the 14th & Main Church of Christ in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

Music from the Heart Is a Melody to God

Jason Fox

Acts 16:25
— “About mid-
night Paul and
Silas were pray-
ing and singing
hymns to God,
and the prison-
ers were listen-
ing to them.”

J a m e s

5:13 — “Is anyone among you suffer-
ing? Let him pray. Is anyone cheer-
ful? Let him sing praise.”

Ephesians 5:18-21 — “And do
not get drunk with wine, for that is de-
bauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,
addressing one another in psalms
and hymns and spiritual songs, sing-
ing and making melody to the Lord
with your heart, giving thanks always
for everything to God the Father in
the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
submitting to one another out of re-
verence for Christ.”

Colossians 3:16 — “Let the
word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one an-
other in all wisdom, singing psalms
and hymns and spiritual songs, with
thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Hebrews 13:15 — “Through him



*then let us
continually
offer up a sac-
rifice of praise
to God, that
is, the fruit of
lips that ac-
knowledge his
name.”*

E v e r y -

thing we do is to be done “in the
name of the Lord Jesus” (with His
authority, Colossians 3:17). If there
is authority, there must likewise be
instruction to govern. Silence is not
permissive, and the Bible is very
clear on that. As an example, why
was Jesus not permitted to be a Le-
vitical priest? Was it because there
was specific instruction given on
who could be a priest? As for Je-
sus, Hebrews 7:14 states, “For it is
evident that our Lord was descended
from Judah, and in connection with
that tribe Moses **said nothing** about
priests.” Silence is clearly **prohibi-
tive**, not **permissive**.

Although Ephesians 5:18-21 is
not dealing specifically with music
within a worship assembly, it is help-
ful to note these verses. The com-

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mand is found in verse 18; we are to “*be filled with the Spirit*”. The verses that follow contain five participle phrases. A participle phrase is the manner in which the command is to be carried out. Verse 18 tells us **what we are to do**, while verses 19-21 tell us **how we are to do** it. In these verses, music has a strong emphasis, but inherent within these participle phrases are limits on what constitutes acceptable music. **Singing** is the clear example, with the **melody being made only within the heart**.

Under the Old Testament, singing and the playing of musical instruments in worship are clearly handled as separate and distinct activities, and the use of one is not inherent within or authorized by the other (2 Chronicles 29:27,28). Before the time of King David, instruments of music were never used in the worship to God. It was David himself who introduced this innovation into the worship.

It is without doubt that instruments played a major role in the Old Testament temple worship. In contrast, their absence within New Testament worship is striking. Both Scripture and secular sources make no mention of instrumental music within the worship of the early church. All references to music within the church during this time and for hundreds of years afterward mention singing only, which is a regulated activity. That is,

even though we can sing, we cannot sing whatever we want. Not only is there no mention of instruments of music made within Christian worship, there are no guidelines to govern their use, but there are guidelines for singing: psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, only.

It is clear that salvation was not to be found under that Old Testament system; it took the blood of Jesus to bring salvation to mankind. Likewise, the music of the church has been moved from what the apostle Paul describes as “lifeless instruments” (1 Corinthians 14:7) under a covenant that could not give life, to living hearts (Ephesians 5:19).

The physical elements of the Old Testament worship, (e.g., the temple worship, animal sacrifices, the playing of lifeless instruments, burning of incense, etc.) can be contrasted with the New Testament where Christians are the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16), musical melody is made within the living heart (Ephesians 5:19), and the fruit of the lips as a sacrifice emanates as praise to God (Hebrews 13:15).

Christian music is no longer in the lifeless instruments of old, but in the living hearts of those who are the temple of God. †

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jimmy Young

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night He was betrayed (Matthew 26:26-29; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). The bread was unleavened, since this is what was always used for the Passover, and this took place at the time of the Passover Supper. The "fruit of the vine" was juice from grapes.

The bread reminds us of Christ's body, which suffered on the cross for us. The fruit of the vine reminds us of His blood, which was shed for the remission of sins. The bread and fruit of the vine remind us of His death.

Jesus said to partake "*in remembrance of me*" (Luke 22:19). This is basically the significance of the Lord's Supper. When we eat the bread and drink the juice, our minds should be on Christ's death and its meaning. First Corinthians 11:26 teaches us that the memorial is to continue to show His death "*till He come*".

Most religions do not observe the

Lord's Supper each week. People often ask why we, in churches of Christ, have the weekly remembrance. Acts 20:7 tells of the practice of the New Testament church. This Scripture describes the Sunday ("*the first day of the week*") service and shows that the New Testament practice was to break bread on that day. (See also Acts 2:42). Observing the Lord's Supper every week is a significant part of the Lord's plan for worship.

Since it is to be the practice of the church to have the Supper every Sunday, it must also be the practice of each Christian to be present every Sunday (Hebrews 10:25). This should be a very special day for Christians.

First Corinthians 11:27-30 warns against partaking "*unworthily*". Notice this is an adverb and refers to the manner in which one partakes. We must not have a with a vain or worldly attitude when we participate.

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Neither should we have the wrong attitude toward others. First Corinthians 10:16,17 shows the unity of God's people as we all share together in the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

The Lord's Supper must not become a mere ritual. While partaking you should seek to concentrate on its significance. The apostle Paul said, "*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*" (1 Corinthians 11:28-30). It is destructive to our souls to neglect or trifle with the Holy Communion.

The Lord's Supper has meaning to us because His death has meaning, and the significance we will see in the supper in His memory will be in proportion to the degree that we love Him for how He died to save us. Some have argued that when we have Communion every week it becomes an empty gesture. This may be true to anyone who does not appreciate or understand the meaning of the memorial.

We should study to gain the ability to sense the real significance of Communion — that it is much more than a mere ritual. Pray to be able to reverently visualize the scene of the cross every time you partake. Christians should always remember that participating in the Lord's Supper is a duty (1 Corinthians 11:24-25), but it is also a privilege and a blessing. †

Jimmy Young works with the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA.

??? I'll Live for God ??? I'll Die for God ???

I saw the above quote on a man's cap, and the very first thing I could see was a question mark and the question, "Would he really?" And then I remembered that the apostle Peter made the same statement to Christ, just in a different terminology. Would I die for God, and *am I living for God?* These are very sobering questions.

How close are we following to God? Are we followers as Peter was? One of the first things we notice about Peter's fall was that he followed afar off. Just how close do we have to follow to be followers? When I am five miles behind a car, am I still following it? Too many have never been close enough to Christ to know who He is and what He is really like. We say we know Him, but we don't act like Him. If we are not living for Him, would we really die for Him? (Selected)

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The Golden Bells

Charles Pugh III

The faithful ancients approached God with a sense of reverence and awe that too often is rare today. Moses was told by God to *“put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground”* (Exodus 3:5). Moses responded with profound awe and reverence. He *“hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon God”* (Exodus 3:6).

In Exodus there is a description concerning a portion of the attire of the high priest. *“And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around. And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die”* (Exodus 28:33-35).

Hanging on the fringe of the high priest’s robe were golden bells and pomegranates (Exodus 28:34). The priest could not take a single step toward the holy place without the tinkling of the golden bells.

In an old sermon preached on this theme during the early part of this century, one preacher made the following observations:

“[He (the high priest)] was to hear those bells – the people, were to hear them when he entered in, when he came out – that he die not. They were an awful protest against irreverence, against neglect in worship. Priest and people, when they heard those golden bells, were to concentrate themselves on their solemn task.

“Our ears, too, might be filled with the tinkling of those golden bells! If the nominal worshippers in the pews felt where they were and what they were doing, could they loll, and sleep, and yawn? Could young persons drop in after the service has begun, and drop out before it is finished as though they were in a theatre? Could they be so careless, so little conscious of the significance of worship, if they felt what God meant to be the lesson of those bells on the High Priest’s robe?”

Have we learned the lesson of the golden bells? †

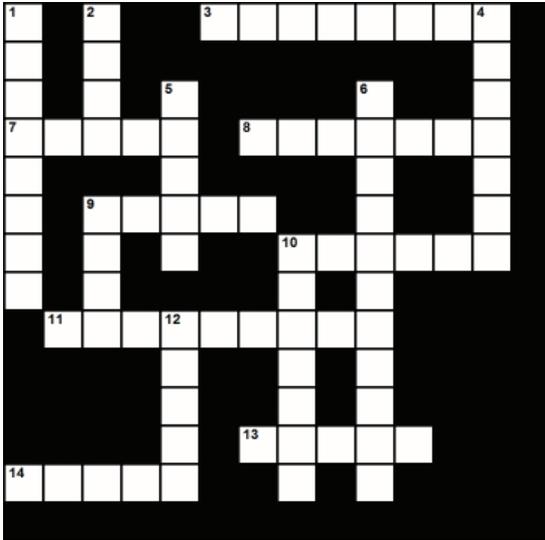
Charles Pugh III lives and preaches in West Virginia, USA.



BIBLE FIND

Bonnie Rushmore

Murders in the Bible



Across

3. Who requested John the Baptist's beheading?

7. Joab and Abishai slew _____.

8. Which queen had the prophets of the Lord killed?

9. Who commanded Zechariah to be stoned?

10. Simeon and Levi slew all the males of _____.

11. Who killed his 70 half-brothers?

13. Who did Jesus say was "a murderer from the beginning"?

14. Who betrayed Jesus?

Down

1. Who did Peter call a murderer?

2. Who killed Abel?

4. Who killed Zachariah and took the throne of Israel?

5. David arranged for the death of _____.

6. Who was killed by his sons, Adramelech and Sharezer?

9. Who killed Absalom?

10. Who was stoned to death for preaching about the church?

12. Who slew an Egyptian and hid him in the sand?

“He Needed to Go Through Samaria”

Gary C. Hampton

At the beginning of John 4, there is an interesting statement about our Lord. *“Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria”* (John 4:1-4 NKJV). Instead of “needed”, the Amplified Bible has, *“It was necessary.”* The ASV has, *“And he must needs pass through Samaria.”* Several other translations have *“He had to”* go through Samaria.

Knowing that Jews during Jesus’ day often crossed the Jordan River and traveled through Perea to avoid Samaria, this simple passage becomes intriguing. Why did the Lord “need” to “pass through Samaria”? Obviously, it was not because other routes for travel were unavailable. The inspired penman must have had something else in mind.

Other passages might shed some light on John’s meaning. For instance, Paul, as a partial defense of his apostleship, wrote, *“For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again”* (2 Corinthians 5:13-15).

Similarly, Peter and John, when commanded by the council not to preach or teach in Jesus’ name, responded, *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:19,20). In both references, we can see the apostles felt compelled to act and speak as they did.

Our Lord felt compelled to go through Samaria. There were many souls in the region needing to hear the good news of the coming kingdom. So, while the disciples went to look for food, Jesus struck up a conversation with the woman at the well. He told her of living water that could spring up in a person and become a fountain of life. His knowledge of her life caused her to leave her water pot to go into the city and tell others to come and see. The returning disciples heard the Master say, *“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”* They wondered

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if someone had given Him something to eat, but He explained, “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34).

The Lord went on to ask, “*Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*” (John 4:35). The message for them and for us should be plain. Those who follow Christ must have an overwhelming sense of urgency to tell the good news. There are souls lost in sin who can be saved only through obeying the truth. Like our Lord, we “*need*” to go where they are. †

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I Met My Master Face to Face

I had walked life’s path with an easy tread,
Had followed where comfort and pleasure led;
And then by chance in a quiet place,
I met my Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for goal,
Much thought for body but none for soul,
I had entered to win this life’s mad race,
When I met my Master face to face.

I had built my castles, reared them high,
Till their towers had pierced the blue of the sky,
I had sworn to rule with an iron mace,
When I met my Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him, and blushed to see,
That His eyes full of sorrow were fixed on me;
And I faltered, and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles vanished and melted away.

Melted and vanished, and in their place
I saw naught else but my Master’s face,
And I cried aloud, “Oh, make me meet
To follow the marks of Thy wounded feet.”

My thought is now for the souls of men;
I have lost my life to find it again
Ever since alone in that holy place
My Master and I stood face to face.

Author Unknown

LOOKING FORWARD

J.C. Choate

What an exciting time to live, to have lived in one century and then to see a new century ushered in! As for the church of the 20th century, we saw gains and losses. Many mistakes were made and, sadly, we did not rise to the occasion of evangelizing the world.

We can't help but think of what might have been, but we must take the attitude of the apostle Paul when he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14).

We look forward to the years ahead in the 21st Century with great anticipation and hope. Jesus has asked His people, the church, to go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). He has also promised to be with us and to help us to accomplish this task (Matthew 28:19,20). Our goal must be to obey Him, setting our minds with determination. We can be assured that He would not ask us to do something He knows we cannot do, so we can forge ahead with confidence. We also know that we have the greatest message in the world, the good news that Jesus died that we might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. It will change men and women, families, countries, and the world. With the world in such a hurting mess, what an incentive to motivate us to work!

And with such backing and support, how can we fail?

- ✓ There are many other reasons why we can reach His goal. The church is found all over the world. Though, admittedly, we are few in number in comparison to the great majority, there is a sufficient number of Christians to carry out this great command.
- ✓ We also have the the funds with which to do the work. We need only the priority of evangelism in our hearts as we decide how to budget the Lord's money.
- ✓ We have a currency, the American Dollar, used by the majority of Christians, and accepted throughout the world. This is not true of the currencies of most nations. How blessed we are not to be hindered by the lack of useable funds with which to work.

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- ✓ We also have a language, the English language, spoken by most members of the church, and by most educated people everywhere. This opens doors so that we can at least begin and continue in English until we can learn the local language.
- ✓ There are many types of transportation to enable us to quickly get to our destination. How blessed we are to have jet planes that go around the world in a matter of hours. Locally, there are cars, buses, and trains, and most of them are available everywhere.
- ✓ We are experiencing the greatest communication revolution known to man. While radio, TV, the cable system, satellites, phones, tape recorders, CDs, the printing press, the Postal system, the Internet, faxes, and e-mail facilities may help the secular world to get its message out, we as the Lord's people can also use all of these mediums to enable us to quickly get the Gospel out to the masses. There are endless possibilities, and we must be exploring ways in which we may more effectively use them.
- ✓ In much of the world, there is relative peace which makes it easy for us to go into most nations. Even where wars and local conflicts occur, these may be powerful tools to open doors that would otherwise be closed.
- ✓ Not going along with the religious world and the doctrines of men can present obstacles, but on the other hand, preaching the oneness of the church, the unity of all believers, wearing the Lord's name, and staying with the Bible on all subjects, can have its own appeal. Certainly, we cannot improve on the Gospel as it was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It might be argued that there are now almost 6 and one-half billion people in the world, with the expectation of that number doubling within a few years. The weak-hearted might ask, "How can it be possible for the Lord's small church to evangelize such numbers?" But wait just a minute! We've already seen the tremendous tools God has provided, through His providential timing. Can't we realize that He knew how many people would be in the world today, and the tools that would be needed to reach them? He has abundantly provided everything necessary for teaching all of the people on earth today, and we can be sure that as the population doubles and triples, or whatever, God will continue to provide the means with which to reach every soul with the gospel. Even at this very moment it would be possible to reach the majority of the people of the world with one sermon, via satellite! The question is, do we want to preach that sermon enough to set the goal and reach for it?

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The facilities of Gospel Broadcasting Network, the organization being developed through the cooperative efforts of churches of Christ and individual Christians, under the oversight of the elders of Highland Church of Christ in Dalton, Georgia. Their ultimate goal is 24 hour/7 days a week coverage of the nations of the world with the Gospel. The programs are streamed also on the internet. You may contact them at Gospel Broadcasting Network, PO Box 23604, Chattanooga TN 37422; Phone: 706.866.9797.

We must not underestimate the Lord and His people and what we, together, are capable of doing. The sad thing is that, for the most part, we have allowed others to use these tremendous methods of communication, when actually God has provided them for the use of His own people in evangelizing the world! What are we waiting for? Why not lay hold on these God-given tools and move quickly to carry out His great commission?

There are pulpits, personal work, literature, radio and TV sermons, schools, student centers, relief work during times of disaster, aid to the poor, and countless other ways to teach and influence souls for the Lord.

The more we do, of course, and the more who are taught and converted, the more we will have opposition from the world, even from the religious world. But opposition and persecution will bring publicity, helping others to know of the church and its work, to learn its message, and to create a desire in honest hearts to obey the Lord and to be a part of His great work. This is what happened in the first century, according to the writings of the New Testament, and the same will follow in the 21st century when we put the Lord first in our lives and evangelize the world.

My! What a joy to obey God, to be saved, to worship Him, to follow and serve Him, and to see His will being accomplished! As His children, we look forward to the on-going years of the 21st century and all that we will be able to accomplish with Him. This will change us and it will change the world. With Christ, we expect victory. With Christ there will be victory! †

J.C. Choate was the founder and editor of The Voice of Truth International until his death in February of 2008.

We Need to Awake and Get Busy

Dale Grissom

James admonishes us in James 1:25: *“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deeds.”* There are many things that a Christian is required to do — among these works is sharing the Gospel with the lost. We are commanded to teach in Matthew 28:19,20: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

Consider also the words of Proverbs 11:30: *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”* Note James 2:24: *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”* Winning souls is a work that demonstrates our wisdom. It is essential to the Lord’s church to teach those in the world the plan of salvation and then teach them to be obedient to all of God’s commands. Those that receive the Word and are baptized into Christ are added to the church, as the Scripture teaches in Acts 2:47: *“Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

We are the earthen vessels to which God has entrusted the responsibility of spreading His Word. If we will carry out our mission, as the church of the Lord, we will be busy trying to spread the borders of His kingdom. Many people who profess to be Christians, members of God’s own family, do not get involved in reaching out to the lost. Some Christians do not study their Bibles as they should, neither do they pray and meditate upon God’s Word. If we could only awake from the sleep of idleness, we would see the church grow. When the early church underwent persecution at Jerusalem, it was scattered abroad, and the Christians went everywhere teaching the Word (Acts 8:4). We need to get busy carrying the message of God’s Word to a lost world. †

Dale Grissom is a fervent soul winner and works with the church of Christ in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

A Simple Method of Teaching the Lost

Jack Harriman

When I have opportunity to study with someone who believes the basics but has not understood and obeyed the Gospel, I follow this four-step plan.

First, I establish the fact that we live under the New Testament and not the Old Testament, and the significance of that fact. The Old Testament was a covenant made exclusively between God and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:12,13; Psalm 147:19,20). The Gentile world was never under this covenant, and even the Jewish world — since the death of Jesus — is no longer under it. So, we must get our instruction from the New Testament.

Second, I establish a common sense approach to Bible study. This involves two things. All the facts must be gathered. For example: When they came to arrest Jesus, Mark says that one of those who stood nearby drew a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest. Matthew informs us that it was a disciple of Jesus who used the sword. Luke says that it was the right ear that was amputated. John identifies the swordsman as Peter and the victim as Malchus. Then, the student must reason accurately from all the facts. Any Bible subject may be approached this way.

Third, I apply this to the question of how and when one becomes a saved person by studying the Great Commission accounts. Matthew says one is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19). Mark says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved (16:16). Luke adds the element of repentance and remission of sins (24:46). So, one becomes a Christian when he believes the Gospel, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of sins.

Fourth, I confirm this conclusion by a brief study of Acts 2. They heard the Gospel and believed it (verses 14-37). When they asked what else they should do, they were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins.

I emphasize two things about believing, repenting, and being baptized. First, they stand together as a unit. Not one of these can be omitted and still result in the remission of sins.

Second, there is a logical progression from faith, to repentance, to baptism, to salvation — which progression has been distorted by some of our religious neighbors.

Question? Where are you in your obedience? †

Jack Harriman is a Gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

Why We Must Preach the Gospel

Samuel A. Matthews

Men have devised many laws, and honest Christians do their best to obey the ones that do not break God's law. However, the Gospel — the Word of God — is our only divinely-written authority in all matters of life. One goal of our preaching and teaching is always to impress upon each Christian our duty to take God's authoritative message to the lost. We want the lost to learn and obey the things from Heaven — not the things from men.

However, the questions are frequently asked, "What will become of the heathen who never heard the Gospel? Wouldn't it be better for a lost soul to stand before our merciful God in the judgment having never heard the Gospel than for him to have heard and not obeyed?" If a person understood the real purpose and philosophy of the Gospel, he would never ask those questions.

To set such questioners to thinking, we ask: "What would have be-

come of the same heathen or lost soul if there had never been any Gospel?" The Gospel was designed to save a world already condemned (cf. Romans 1:18; 2:12; 3:10-12,23; 5:8). It is only in a relative sense that people are lost because they do not obey the Gospel. Primarily, **people are lost because they are sinners.**

To illustrate: A boat is rushed out to rescue a drowning man. He refuses to be rescued, and he drowns. Now, why did he drown? Some one replies, "He drowned because he would not get into the boat." Wrong! The boat had nothing to do with his drowning; he drowned because he was in the water, and he would have drowned just the same had there never been a boat. Of course, his refusing to be rescued made his drowning a case of suicide.

Just so with the sinner. The Gospel is sent out to rescue the perishing (cf. Romans 1:16). When the sinner refuses to be rescued, it intensifies

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his guilt and shows it to be a case of spiritual suicide. Yet, the Gospel had nothing to do with his perishing; he would have perished had there never been a Gospel. The boat was a means of rescue, and so is the Gospel.

Many of our denominational friends are inconsistent when it comes to saving souls. Their inconsistency is seen in that they contend that God converts people through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but yet, they conduct evangelistic campaigns and support missionaries. Consistency demands that they stand back in silence and let God convert sinners that way. If their teaching of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit were true, there would be no need to preach the Word. They should dismiss all their preachers. Why have a preacher to preach in order that souls may be converted, if they are converted through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, apart from the Word?

If we have been Christians any amount of time, we are aware that Christ has commanded that the Gospel be preached. *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

What is the first part of this command? Go and preach the Gospel. What is the second part of this

command? Believe and be baptized. It is as needful to obey the first part of the Great Commission as it is to obey the latter part. In fact, obedience to the latter part is dependent upon man’s obedience to the first part. The Gospel must be taken to those who know it not!

We will now study six biblical reasons why the Gospel must be preached to others. **First of all, it is impossible to have Gospel fruit without first sowing the seed of the kingdom.** Jesus taught in the Parable of the Sower that only the good soil (those who hear and understand the Gospel) will bring forth fruit (read Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23). The point we must see is that the fruit was not produced until AFTER the sowing of the seed (the Gospel or Word of God — Luke 8:11).

Second, no one can please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), and there can be no production of faith apart from hearing the Word (cf., Romans 10:14). Hearing the Word of God produces faith (Romans 10:17). That is one reason why we have the written Word (read John 20:30,31). The Corinthians are good examples of this teaching. Many of them heard the Word and believed (Acts 18:8). We must beware, for Satan knows that faith is produced as one hears the Word (cf., Luke 8:12).

Third, men cannot be drawn

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to God apart from being taught of Him. Only those who hear and learn of the Father can come to Jesus (John 6:44,45). Since the Father draws sinners unto Christ through the Gospel (cf., 2 Thessalonians 2:14), we should plainly see how important it is that we sound it out!

A fourth reason why the Gospel must be preached is because Jesus placed teaching first in the system of conversion (read Matthew 13:15). In this passage, we have teaching — “*see with their eyes, and hear with their ears.*” We also have understanding, turning (or conversion), and healing (or forgiveness). If there is no teaching, there will be no understanding; no understanding, no conversion; no conversion, no healing or forgiveness. These facts should again impress upon each Christian our duty to take the Gospel to the lost. Just in proportion as we fail to do our duty in preaching the Gospel to the lost, we fail in making it possible for them to be saved.

Fifth, the Lord’s Word is the begetting power in the process of the new birth. The Bible says, “*Being born again...by the word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23). Just as there can be no physical birth without a father, neither can there be a new spiritual birth without the teaching of God’s Word.

And sixth, where there is no preaching, there can be no salva-

tion (read Romans 10:13,14). Let us begin at the last of this passage and go back to the first. Where there is no preaching, there can be no hearing; no hearing, no believing; no believing, no calling; no calling, no salvation. So it does not matter whether we begin at the first and go to the last, or begin at the last and go back to the first. We arrive at the same conclusion; namely, the pure Gospel must be preached for souls to be saved. †

Samuel A. Matthews works with the church in Groton, Connecticut, USA.

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Romans 10:14,15 NKJV

“Prepare for Impact”

Mike Benson

“How did he do it...?” The national media has touted Chesley Sullenberger as a national hero. The internet, newspapers and television have all given him special praise. Even President Bush made a congratulatory call. The accolades are not unwarranted. Mr. Sullenberger, or “Sully” as he’s called by his friends, did something extraordinary.

He was piloting US Airways flight 1549 over New York City when his craft collided with a flock of birds. Moments later he somehow managed to land the crippled aircraft in the Hudson River without the loss of life or serious injury. It was an incredible effort. Many have deemed it “miraculous”.

Yet, it wasn’t actually a miracle. A miracle — in the biblical sense — is not merely something highly unusual; it is something that supersedes the laws of nature (Mark 16:17-19). If the Airbus A320 was suddenly suspended in mid-air, that would have been a miracle.

Though, don’t misunderstand me; Sullenberger did something worthy of the laurels he’s received. What makes this real-life story so compelling is that he was uniquely qualified for this kind of emergency. He had been preparing virtually all of his life for this very situation.

- He had his pilot’s license by age 14 and was flying a crop duster in Texas by age 15.
- He has logged more than 19,000 hours of flight time.
- He was named “best aviator” in his class at the Air Force Academy.
- He had flown F-4 Phantom II fighter jets.
- He was a flight leader in Europe and the Pacific.
- He led war-game exercises over Nevada.
- He investigated air disasters.
- He mastered glider flying.
- He studied the psychology of how cockpit crews behave in a crisis.
- A few years ago, he started a California consulting firm that offers companies ways to apply the latest safety advances in commercial aviation.

Chesley Sullenberger was ready. When the pressure was on, he called upon his years of training, expertise and observation. Even when it was

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obvious the plane was going down, Sullenberger not only flew the broken jetliner, but he came over the intercom and calmly told his 149 fellow passengers, “Brace for impact”.

I hope the analogy is obvious. All of us face crises in our lives. **All of us.** (If you haven’t, you will.) Maybe it’s an untimely death. Maybe it’s a crushing financial difficulty or loss of a job. Maybe it’s a serious, life-threatening illness. Maybe it’s a heartbreaking, soul-wrenching relationship problem. Maybe it’s a haunting addiction. Maybe it’s a combination of issues. Sooner or later, we all face “mid-air collisions”.

However, *why* is it that some brethren not only endure great adversity, but they seem to somehow conquer it? In terms of this recent aviation accident, why is it that some folks manage to “land safely”, even under great duress, while other children of God “crash and burn”? Why is it that some Christians continue to live faithfully despite incalculable pain, while others leave the Lord and the church?

The answer may sound too simplistic, but it’s biblical. It’s a matter of faith. **Faith!**

**And as it is appointed for men to die once,
but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).**

Dear reader, are you preparing? Are you, like Chesly, training (1 Peter 1:6,7)? Paul says, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17). Faith comes from hearing and reading and thinking about the Word!

Some brethren spend a lifetime with a TV remote in their hand. Others skip Lord’s Day Bible Study and the evening assembly, not to mention Wednesday night class. They don’t even bring a Bible to the assembly! “Do I have to?” “Am I obligated to?” they ask. “Do I have to read, and study and meditate?” “I don’t have the time!” they insist. Then the collision comes. They crash.

There’s a flock of birds on the horizon. Are you ready? “BRACE FOR IMPACT.” †

Mike Benson is a Gospel preacher living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA

**The trouble with many people is that they take so
long to start to get ready to begin to commence!**

Are You Prepared for the Big One?

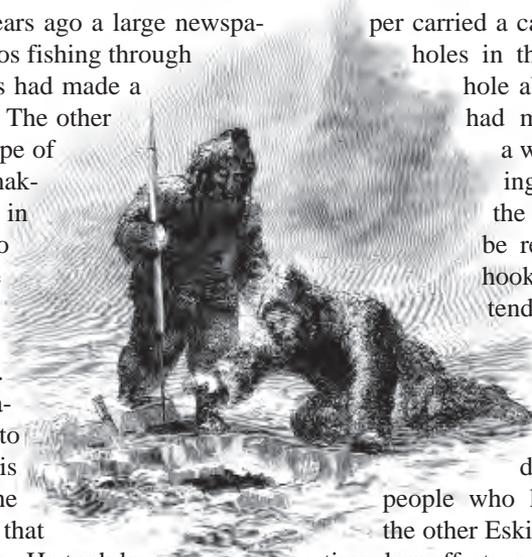
Bob Plunket

Several years ago a large newspaper carried a cartoon showing two Eskimos fishing through holes in the ice. One of the Eskimos had made a hole in the shape of a manhole. The other had made a huge hole in the shape of a whale. Asked why he was making such an enormous hole in the ice, he said he wanted to land anything he

The world men like this. To be different. great expectations and they want to land whatever is These are the ones. It is true that ing a lot sooner. He took less was big enough to catch what there were no big ones down there, and if there were, they would not hit his line. Then, too, perhaps he did not want to carry out one of that size.

So many have not made preparation for the big opportunities that come in life. Some have good bait, good tackle, but small vision and small expectation. Young people, take time to prepare. It takes time and work and effort to get ready for life. Get ready for the big opportunities that may come along. It is a shame to catch something big, only to have to cut the line because you were not prepared to land it. Have faith in life. We need to believe that it's out there or down there. Have faith in yourself and in your skills and talents, and above all things, have faith in God.

Paul said, "*I can do all things through Him who strenghteneth me*" (Philippians 4:13). Remember, you can take the little ones in the large openings, but you cannot take the big ones in the small openings. Quicker and easier is not the answer to everything. Many young people, without preparation, want to jump into a quick job, and others into the marriage bed, only to find that



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tends to laugh at They dare They have tions of life, be able to down there. people who land the other Eskimo was fish-time, less effort, and his opening he expected. Perhaps he thought

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they did not take the time to get ready. The end can be frustrating, disappointing, and even tragic.

Look at Jesus. He made an opening big enough for the whole world, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, everyone. Some say He spent thirty years in preparation for three years' ministry, but remember: for His unparalleled accomplishment and victory there was a price to be paid. †

Bob Plunket preaches for the Lord's church in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA.

Where is Your Focus?

Cub Scott

Leonardo da Vinci was famous for many paintings. However, his most significant work was the "The Last Supper", painted in a church in Milan. This monumental fresco took four years to complete. An interesting story is told as to why the work took so long.

When da Vinci was almost finished, a friend commented on how incredibly moving the painting was — especially the silver cup on the table. "It was brilliant, beautiful!" he said. "My eyes were immediately drawn to it." Da Vinci got so angry that he immediately painted over the cup, blotting it out. The focus of the painting was to be Jesus, not the cup. All attention had to be drawn to Him; anything that detracted from Him had to be removed.

What is the focus in your life? We must remove anything that comes before Christ or hinders us from serving Him. He must be the center of our lives. While imprisoned in Rome the apostle Paul said, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). His life was focused on Jesus.

Each day we're faced with many distractions. Literally hundreds of things vie for our attention. Like Paul, is your life centered on Christ? Is He your focus?

Cub Scott works with the Northside Church of Christ in Harrison, Arkansas, USA.





Doing What You Can

Dale Jenkins

Did you hear about the group in Boulder, Colorado called “We The People”? They had a bake sale to “Offset the national debt” of 4 trillion dollars (that’s \$4,000,000,000,000.00). They made forty-nine dollars and fifty cents (that’s \$49.50).

What’s your reaction to that story? More than that, I’d like to have seen the reaction of the member of the treasury who received the check.

Here’s my reaction. They may not have done much, but they did something. They may not have settled the four trillion dollar debt, but they made a contribution, and if every American would make a similar attempt the debt would shrink. Now, you know this article isn’t really about national debts and shrinking them, but about a much larger task.

There are well over one billion (that’s 6,000,000,000) souls in the world. The majority have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are multitudes — more of them that have no Bible than those who do. Now, when there are

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several billion without Bibles, some might scoff at our efforts, but the fact is if every Christian would make a serious attempt, the Bible would begin to saturate the world. We can either be cynics who decry the problem, or saints who work to make a difference where we are.

Maybe you've heard the story about the old man who was walking along the seashore, picking up star fish that the tide had washed in, and throwing them back into the sea. A little boy laughed at the old man; "Why, there must be thousands of them out there and the tide will continue to force more onto the shore. You're wasting your time. It'll never make any difference." As the old man picked up another and hurled it toward the sea he said, "It'll make a difference to this one."

We may not save every soul or reach every individual with the Gospel, but we will make a difference to some. *"And of some have compassion, making a difference..."* (Jude 1:22). Inviting that friend to worship the thousandth time may be the one time he comes. Teaching your children about Jesus as they squirm around may be difficult, but the next story about His compassion may forever touch their lives. Showing up to teach that rowdy bunch of fourth graders may hardly seem like spiritual service, but there may be a future church leader in that class. Washing baptismal clothes, or mowing the yard for a widow may seem menial, but you are making a difference.

God takes our feeble efforts and blesses them over and over again. He blesses far greater than we expect. *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Ephesians 3:20, 21). †

Dale Jenkins preaches for the Spring Meadow congregation in Spring Hill, Tennessee, USA.

**“Do what you can,
with what you have,
where you are today.”**

Ethel Percy Andrus, teacher & founder of AARP

The Deceitfulness of Sin

Danny Cline

Desires are a wonderful part of life, but strong desires, intensified desires, must be carefully watched. Being neither good nor bad in their nature, they want to attach themselves to the objects of our desire (see John 17:24; 1 John 2:16).

Because we seek satisfaction and fulfillment in them, we may learn too late that our desires have characterized our lives. Wanting what is good is advantageous, but evil desires destroy us. They are deceptive and tricky, promising what they do not deliver. They pass away with the world; but people who have good desires (who seek God's will or desire) live forever (1 John 2:17).

The Devil is a great deceiver, deceiving the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He began by deceiving Eve in Eden in the beginning, and he has had success with all the rest of us of responsible age (1 Timothy 2:14; James 1:14), including the inspired apostles of Christ who wrote honestly of their own deception (1 Peter 4:3; Titus 3:3;

Ephesians 2:3). Lusts of deceit corrupt and ruin us (Ephesians 4:22; 2 Peter 1:4). Bad people proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13).

Hearts of men become darkened and foolish when they refuse to honor and thank the God they know. The truth of God is exchanged by them for falsehood, and the lusts of their hearts lead to immorality (Romans 1:21, 25,26). They become full of deceit (verse 29). Their sin compels them to obey its lusts, producing even more sin (Romans 6:12). Don't be deceived (James 1:14-16).

Satan's plot is to outwit us and lead us to sin (2 Corinthians 2:11). *"Let no one deceive you...the one who practices sin is of the Devil who has been practicing sin from the beginning. Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil"* (1 John 3:7,8).

The "old man of sin", corrupted by deceptive desire, must be removed. The new man, taught in truth, must be put on (Ephesians 4:20-24). As

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Christ taught only truth, those who are unable to hear His teaching do not understand it, and end up doing the desires of the Devil (John 8:43-45).

The truth of God teaches us to be obedient children, not allowing our lives to be shaped by the desires of our former ignorance (1 Peter 1:14). Our souls are purified by obeying the truth (verse 22), souls that once were at war with their fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11; James 4:1). Recounting the waste of the war, we are not to live the remainder of our time on earth “to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2).

“The saving grace of God has been revealed to all men, instructing us that we should deny irreverence and worldly lusts, and live sensibly, uprightly, and reverently in the present world” (Titus 2:11,12). Deny and say “No” to evil desire.

The flesh with its passions and desires must be “crucified” (Galatians 5:24). *“We know this, that our old self has been crucified together with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer*

serve sin” (Romans 6:6). Attend the funeral of your old self as you are baptized into Christ Jesus, being buried together with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4a). We put on Christ by this immersion (Galatians 3:27).

All this is *“in order that we also might walk in newness of life, in the same manner that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father”* (Romans 6:4b). Having put on Christ, and having put off the old self, we have clothed ourselves with the Lord Jesus so as to *“not make provision for fleshly lusts”* (Romans 13:14).

Then, walking by the direction of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in God’s word, we will no longer fulfill the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). We will want to encourage one another every day so that we do not again become hardened in heart by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13). †

Danny Cline is a Gospel preacher, living in Blue Ridge, Georgia, USA.

It isn't the things that go in one ear and out the other that hurt as much as the things that go in one ear, get all mixed up, and then slip out of the mouth.

Keeping On

Rex Banks

In the shade of a juniper tree, a leather-girded prophet of God poured out his heart in prayer. *“It is enough, now O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers”* (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah was deeply distressed, hardly surprising in view of the fact that the bloodthirsty Jezebel had a band of cutthroats on his trail. Further, if we recall that Elijah had just enjoyed a great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, his distress is even more understandable. I mean, God had **empowered** Elijah, given the enemy into his hands, elevated him in the sight of all the people! What a letdown, what a disappointment now to be a hunted man when the Lord had seemed so near just a few hours before.

Maybe the prophet felt a little like the Israelites of Moses’ day. God had promised to redeem them *“with an outstretched arm and with great judgments”* (Exodus 6:6), and it had happened. Ten plagues upon Egypt had demonstrated the power of Jehovah against the so-called “gods” of Egypt: Apis, Hapi, Hathor and others, and about three million Israelites were set free. The Pharaoh’s army perished in the sea,

and Israel and the nation were exalted: *“Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, majestic in holiness”* (Exodus 15:11). Israel was on a high; then, three days later in a hot, arid wilderness, the thirsty multitude came to a pool, and its waters were bitter (verse 23)! Undrinkable water and three million thirsty people! Where was the God who had just recently performed such wonders on their behalf? Just days earlier, the very forces of nature had served them, and now they couldn’t get a drink! So, out goes the victory song and in comes the grumbling against God’s appointed leader (verse 24).

Maybe like me, you recognize yourself in the prophet under the tree and in the thirsty multitude at the waters of Marah. How many of us come out of the waters of baptism “on a high” and secretly think, “Well, from now on it’s easy sailing. If God loved me enough to send Jesus, then He loves me enough to deal with life’s trials and tribulations. Now, I will bask in the sunlight of His blessings, and in sweet serenity, I will grow into a wise, spiritually mature saint before ascending to the Lord in clouds of

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glory.” We feel invulnerable.

Then, a friend (a Christian brother or sister) breaks our heart, or the mind-numbing, will-sapping routine of daily existence just drags us down into the pit. Under our own juniper tree we protest: “But Lord, I thought my Christian walk would be a victory parade. I began with such plans.” At our own bitter pool we grumble, “It’s just not what I expected! After all the promises about the abundant life, peace, and joy, I’m disappointed and hurt and angry!” Sadly, some of us renounce the God who seemed to promise so much, but who simply did not live up to our expectations. We’ve seen it happen. What is the solution?

Brethren, let’s get it right. God **did not promise** a rose-strewn pathway through life. What He promised us is the strength to deal with life’s problems in such a way that they become blessings to us, developing **endurance and perseverance** (Romans 5:3ff; James 2:2ff).

Look, God didn’t **desert** Israel in the wilderness. In fact, His servant Moses “led” them to Marah (Exodus 15:22), and “...there He **tested them**” (verse 25). God’s purpose was “*to know what was in their heart*” (Deuteronomy 8:2). Doesn’t it make a difference to know that He is in control even in the *down* times? Doesn’t it make a difference to know that the

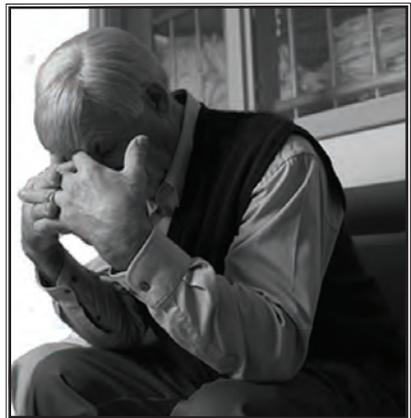
way we deal with problems reveals something about our hearts (trust or unbelief)?

Listen, Elijah’s distress was not proof of God’s absence but proof of Elijah’s wavering faith. The God of creation sent an angel with a bread cake to feed the depressed prophet (1 Kings 19:5,6).

Problems are not proof that God no longer numbers the hairs of our head (Matthew 10:30); they are proof that God is molding us, strengthening us, maturing us. That’s what fathers do (Hebrews 12:1).

Never give up because problems come! Never, never see problems as proof that God has deserted us! Life may not be fair, but in Christ it is a prelude to joy inexplicable. **Never give up!** †

Rex Banks works with the church in Hamilton, New Zealand.





5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Unclean Relationships

Paula Bates

1. Marriage is honorable among all, and the _____ undefiled; but _____ and adulterers God will _____. Hebrews 13:4
2. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit _____, Do not _____, Do not _____, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. Mark 10:19
3. Flee _____. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication _____ against his own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18
4. The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; _____, fornication, uncleanness, _____. Galatians 5:19
5. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to _____, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an _____, suffering the vengeance of _____. Jude 7

Note: Of the seven lists of sin found in the writings of the apostle Paul, the word fornication is found in five of them and is first on the list each time (Example: 1 Corinthians 5:11; Colossians 3:5).



1. Bed, fornicators, judge
2. Adultery, kill, steal
3. Fornication, sinneth
4. Adultery, lasciviousness
5. Fornication, example, eternal fire

Losing Its Young People

Dan Jenkins

“The church is losing its young people!” I hear it often as brethren talk, read it in bulletins, listen to it said at lectureships ... almost anywhere I go. For a long time it has bothered me, so let me address myself to the subject.

The charge puts the blame in the wrong place. If it means, as I most often hear it used, that the church collectively has failed, then I strongly disagree. We have not thought clearly about this matter. I believe we need to seek the real source of the problem. It is not the church that is losing its young people. *Christian homes are losing their youth!* It is to the home that God has given the primary responsibility of training up children. There is not one verse that gives this primary responsibility to the church! Read it, then read it again, and you’ll see that the Bible clearly places the responsibility on the home, never on the church.

Where is the eldership that never considers the needs of young people? Where is the preacher who is not concerned about young people, who never befriends them or designs

sermons to fit their special needs? Where is the Bible class teacher who isn’t concerned? Some young people do leave the church, but I’m tired of parents putting the blame on the church for what the home failed to provide. Where is the home that accomplishes all that God wants it to accomplish but finds the church working against the home? This is not the problem. The problem is that there are homes that fail to provide what God intended for them to provide, so they work against what the church has to offer.

Let’s keep it clear. The church cannot lose its young people, for God never gave young people to the church. He never gave to the church the primary responsibility to nurture them! He never established the church as the primary means to insure that children become faithful Christians. Tragically, many of our precious young people are leaving Christ, but let’s be honest as we think about it. The problem most often lies in the homes and not in the church. ✠

Dan Jenkins preaches for the church in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA.

At the Dinner Table

John Gipson



Take a meal. Any meal. Every cook knows the lack of a single ingredient makes a world of difference. You know how things taste without salt, but Solomon considered something beyond various seasonings. He saw love as the necessary, indispensable ingredient for a successful dinner. Here's the way he put it:

“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it” (Proverbs 15:17). The “fatted ox” is royal fare, a sign of prosperity and luxury, but there’s no doubt about where Solomon stood on the matter. He obviously preferred a very plain meal in an atmosphere of love to a gourmet dinner served in a climate of hatred or hostility. Any ‘amens’ to that?

Even the best of foods tend to stick in the throat when bitter resentments, anger, and hatred prevail at the table. A meal, designed not only to satisfy hunger but to strengthen the bonds of friendship, is spoiled when husbands and wives are quarreling, or they are criticizing the children, or the children are fussing among themselves. After such an ordeal everyone leaves the table unhappy and dissatisfied. The best of foods cannot make up for a lack of love. One of my teachers, in commenting on this truth, told the story of a child who, after receiving some sharp criticism at the family table, left murmuring, *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”*

Yes sir, the simplest fare served in a happy atmosphere is far more satisfying than a T-bone steak with quarreling. Forget the necessary ingredient of love and you have a recipe for ruining any meal. Let love rule at the table (and everywhere else). It’s better than luxury. †

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

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The Marriage King

Bill Dillon

Glynn “Scotty” Wolfe was the most-married man in the world, holding the Guinness Book of World Records title as the most-married man. The acclaimed Marriage King died on June 10, 1997 of heart disease at his Redlands, California nursing home. He was 88.

Although the Marriage King had made 29 trips down the aisle, not one of his 29 wives came forward to claim his body for burial.

A news release stated, “Wolfe’s body lies unclaimed at the San Bernadino County Morgue...If no one steps forward to claim him this week, Wolfe will be cremated by the county and dumped into a collection grave.”

Wolfe’s numerous marriage relationships were weak on commitment. For example, Wolfe left one of his wives because she ate sunflower seeds in bed, and he divorced another because she used his toothbrush! The Bible teaches by contrast that matrimony is not only holy, but long-lasting. One man for one woman for one lifetime is God’s way (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:1-3)!

When the marriage tie is no stronger than sunflower seeds and toothbrushes, then you can’t expect much at the hospital or funeral home! When will we learn?†

Bill Dillon preaches for the Lord’s church in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.

How the Romans Won the War and Lost the Peace

Bert Mercer

William Barclay, in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, states that during the period of the Roman Republic, the Romans had not a single divorce for a 520 year period. However, as they moved away from the Republic into more of a socialistic empire, things began to change. Although they had previously conquered the Greeks militarily, the Greeks “Grecianized” the Romans in terms of morality. The fornication, homosexuality, and related sins of Corinth are an indication of this Grecianization in the first century.

Similarly, the American Republic has also moved further and further away from personal responsibility toward more collectivism — arrangements whereby we are subject to many more laws, regulations, institutions, and bureaus designed to do what was previously done by individuals. We are now suffering the same dissolution as did ancient Rome: our morals, our patriotism, our self-esteem, our productivity, and, of course, our homes have deteriorated.

There is little that individuals can do to change a major tide of history, but we can form our families and our characters according to the ancient standards of God, as recorded in the Bible. We do not have to go along with the crowd. We do not have to salivate like Pavlov’s pups simply because the culture in which we live rings a bell of conformity. We can resist the fornication, lies, indolence, and dishonesty around us. We can form marriages with like-minded Christian people and live faithfully ever after. We can nurture our children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

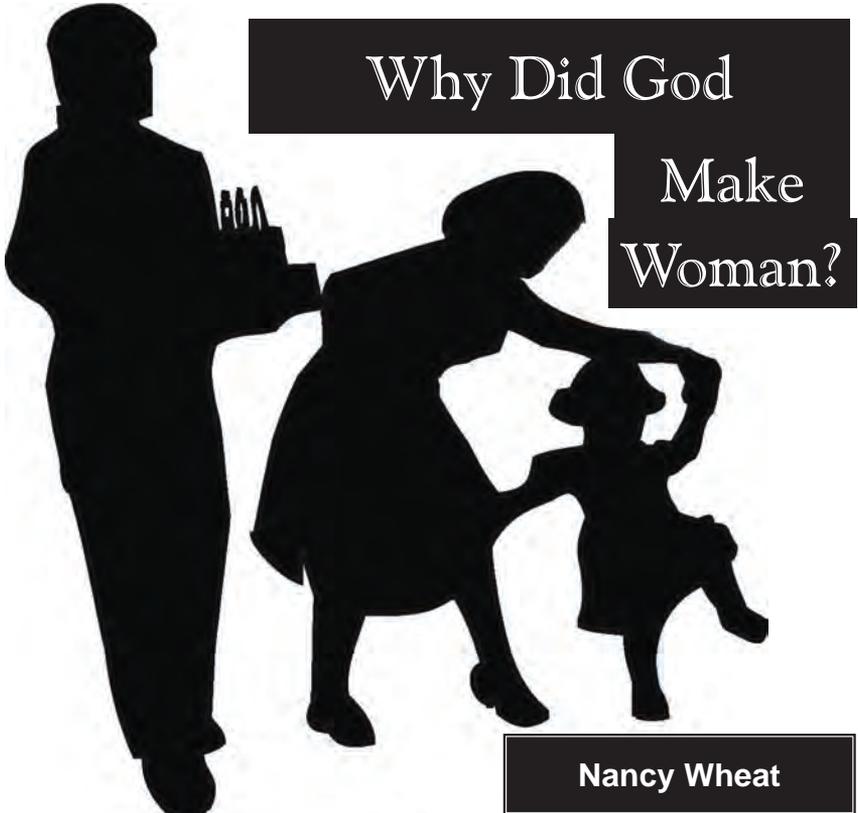
Of course, as Lot could tell you, it’s difficult to keep our family standards intact in Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet, it’s not impossible. Remember, “*He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). †

For many years Bert Mercer was the preacher for the Crestview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas, USA.

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Why did God make woman? Did God ever make anything with no purpose or with no reason for being? No way! Our God is a great Creator; He has made every minute creature with a wonderful purpose. So, too, was woman made with a wonderful God-given purpose. It does not matter what I think woman's purpose is. It doesn't matter what any person's idea is. God's purpose is the purpose we must fulfill.

Genesis tells the story of God creating this incredible universe. Each plant, fly, bird, and animal in this marvelous creation had a purpose. Man's purpose was to tend the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). It was a seemingly idyllic situation, but God said, "*It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him*" (Genesis 2:18). Then God performed yet another miracle. He made Adam's "help



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meet” — woman. Man was not complete, creation was not complete, until God made woman. There is no one in creation like woman. No other creature can fulfill woman’s purpose.

In Genesis 2:23,24 the man said, *“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.”* The text goes on to tell us that *“for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.”* Woman’s purpose is to partner man. God created man and woman to form families, the most basic units in society. We are to help each other in the smooth running of the family. Our roles as man and woman differ, however. Just as God stayed in heaven while Jesus came to earth to fulfill their work, each having a different role, so man and woman have separate roles in the home.

Animals fulfill their God-given roles through instinct. Most of what we do, though, has to be learned. Ephesians 5:21,23 and 1 Peter 3:1-9 tell women to be submissive to their husbands. To be submissive means to “lovingly defer to someone” or to “put yourself wholly at the disposal” of someone. Ladies, read Philippians 2:5-8 and then decide if you are being submissive in Jesus’ way. Submission does not mean being subjugated or trampled on. Jesus submitted to His Father’s will with loving obedience.

Let us give ourselves to the leadership of our husbands. Yes, many men are not fulfilling their part, to love as Christ loved the church, but this does not excuse us from our part. First Peter 3 tells us to win that kind of husband *“without a word by the purity and reverence of your lives.”* Titus 2:3-5 tells women to *“learn to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands.”* Why? *“So that no one will malign the word of God.”* As Christians, we readily agree that we would never want God’s Word maligned. Do our lives back up this desire?

Let’s pray together, husbands and wives, that we will help each other live according to the pattern God gave us for our homes. Men, if you will treat your wives lovingly and gently as the weaker vessel, they will have an easier time submitting to your leadership. Ladies, if you respect, admire and obey your husbands as Sarah did toward Abraham, they will find it easier to be gentle with you.

Remember, we are helping each other to fight Satan’s power over our lives. When we fight each other, point fingers, and excuse ourselves, Satan has won. Don’t let him control your family. †

Nancy Wheat is the wife of preacher Bobby Wheat, and they work with the congregation in Winfield, Kansas, USA.



Since the history of mankind is inseparably linked with the marriage relationship, the importance of this subject cannot be stressed too much. The evils that grow from a perverted conception of wedlock constitute one of the chief legal problems of America. During one year, one small city alone had 2,820 divorce suits, to say nothing of the thousands of cases in other courts of our land.

The Origin and Sanctity of the Marriage Relationship

Paul Southern

Society's view of marriage will determine the permanence and unity of the home, and the destiny of the nation. The salvation of man depends upon the proper reaction to this subject, for no person can trifle with the holy state of matrimony and hope to be saved, regardless of how good he is otherwise. Violation of the inspired laws governing this sacred institution will keep multitudes out of "*the city which lies four-square*".

The Origin of Marriage. Marriage is a divine and time-honored institution that began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18-24). It was instituted by Jehovah in Paradise back in the very morning of time (Genesis 1:27). From the beginning, Heaven's benedictions have rested upon the

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

marriage relationship (Genesis 1:28). Sociologists claim that “we have no conclusive evidence of the origin of the family,” and “that the family arose as a sequel to the possession of private property” (Kinneman). Furthermore, they attempt to prove “that marriage has its source in the family, rather than the family in marriage” (Goodsell). These views fail to harmonize with the Bible. Since Christians “*walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Corinthians 5:7), we believe in the divine origin of marriage as set forth in the Bible.

The Divine Sanction of Marriage. In every dispensation of religion — Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian — God has sanctioned wedlock as an honorable estate. By the decree of Heaven, Adam and Eve became one flesh (Genesis 4:1). Moses, commissioned by Jehovah to deliver Israel and write the Jewish covenant, was a married man (Exodus 2:21). Jesus adorned and beautified the marriage relationship by attending the feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11), where He performed His first miracle by changing the water into wine. Paul commanded that “*marriage be had in honor among all men, and let the bed be undefiled*” (Hebrews 13:4). Peter, to whom Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, was a married man (Matthew 8:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5).

The Sacredness of Marriage. Jehovah has placed a halo of beauty and sanctity around holy wedlock, which man can ill afford to molest. In the Old Testament, many typical allusions to marriage show the spiritual relationship between God and His people (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:19). In the New Testament, Jesus becomes the bride-groom (Matthew 9:15; John 3:29), and the church is the bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7 and 21:2, 9). Thus, Jesus likened the kingdom of Heaven to a marriage feast, to which many were invited, but they spurned the invitation (Matthew 22:2-14). In giving us a picture of the church, Paul compares it to the marriage relationship (Ephesians 5:22,23) and shows the tender love that should permeate this intimate union of man and woman.

The future of society depends upon the sanctity of the home. Only by strict adherence to the marriage vows can this sanctity be maintained. By degrading the institution of matrimony, Satan knows that he can bring about the destruction of both society and souls. When marriage loses its sacredness, the home, which is built on marriage, will fall. The home is the oldest divine institution. It is the center around which all other institutions have been built, and with which they stand or fall. Therefore, the holy estate of matrimony should be considered reverently, and entered prayerfully, in fear of God. †

Paul Southern died in 1999 at age 98 after having been a professor of Bible, and later head of the Bible Department, at Abilene Christian College in Abilene, Texas, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



The preacher had all of his remaining teeth pulled and new dentures were being made. The first Sunday, he preached only 10 minutes. The second Sunday, he preached only 20 minutes. But, on the third Sunday he preached 1 hour and 25 minutes.

When asked about this by some of the congregation, he responded, “The first Sunday, my gums were so sore it hurt to talk. The second Sunday, my new dentures were hurting me a lot. The third Sunday, I accidentally grabbed my wife’s dentures...and I couldn’t stop talking.”



Dan was a single guy living at home with his father and working in the family business. When he found

out he was going to inherit a fortune when his sickly father died, he decided he needed a wife with which to share his fortune.

One evening at an investment meeting he spotted the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her natural beauty took his breath away. “I may look like just an ordinary man,” he said to her, “but in just a few years my father will die, and I’ll inherit \$200 million.”

Impressed, the woman obtained his business card, and three days later she became his stepmother.



A bit of advice from one who knows from personal experience... It’s worth the extra cost to buy a full-length mirror as opposed to a half-length mirror.

Yesterday morning I got dressed, looked myself over carefully in my half-length mirror, and then went out for my morning walk at the local mall.

I am now thoroughly convinced that it is equally important to see both the top and the bottom halves before going out in public. The number of folks walking with me continued to grow, and I finally discovered why...I had forgotten to put my pants on before leaving home!

Cousin Luke never got much

PROVERBS 17:22

schoolin', but you ought'n to think he's just a dummy neither. I'll tell ya somethin' else, too – Luke shore don't like the government much.

Why, just t'other day he was talkin' 'bout this daylight savin's time, and he said, "Only the government would believe that you could cut a foot off'n the top of a blanket, sew it to the bottom, and end up with a longer blanket."



One day a little girl came home from school and said to her mother, "Mommy, today in school I was punished for something that I didn't do."

The mother exclaimed, "That's terrible! I'm going to have a talk with your teacher about this by the way, what was it that you didn't do?"

The little girl replied, "My homework."



We went to breakfast at a restaurant where the "seniors' special" was two eggs, bacon, hash browns, and toast for \$1.99.

"Sounds good," my wife said, "but I don't want the eggs."

"Then I'll have to charge you \$2.49 because you're ordering a la carte," the waitress warned her.

"You mean I'd have to pay for not taking the eggs?" my wife asked

incredulously.

"Yes!" stated the waitress.

"I'll take the special then," my wife said.

"How do you want your eggs?" the waitress asked.

"Raw and in the shell," my wife replied.

She took the two eggs home and baked a cake.



Charlie's wife is apparently just a notch or two off center. He said that she now has put the goldfish bowl on the phonograph and turns it on so the goldfish can get their exercise without having to swim around.



The grandmother was in the bathroom, putting on her makeup under the watchful eyes of her young granddaughter, as she'd done many times before. After she applied her lipstick and started to leave, the little one said, "But Gramma, you forgot to kiss the toilet paper goodbye!"



You are a lousy cook if your kids' favorite drink is Alka-Seltzer.

HEY, YOU KIDS!



I'd like to bring up a subject today that is a bit awkward for most people. C.S. Lewis calls it the problem with pain and, trust me, it has many other names. The punch line is, "Why is it that bad things happen to good people?" In particular, why do they happen if there is a good God in heaven who is all-powerful? I mean, if He is able to do anything and is good, then how, I ask you, could He allow bad things to happen without just cause?

Now the answer to this question is seldom taken very well. Truth be told, it usually is asked only during pain, and that is the least favorable time for a person to

Healing

PFC Alex Gibson

understand the answers. And, yes, I said answers, because that one question will spawn about 50 others that need answering, too. Here's the truth. God does not lack power, nor is He any less than good. Bad things happen and not by God's hand — but He works through them, none-the-less. As there is no simple way to sum this one up, I'm going to hit the main points as best I can.

Imagine that a friend or family member dies suddenly. You have a flood of questions right there: primarily, "why", and "who's to blame?" "Why" is a question that usually only God can answer, and with the absence of that answer often comes blame placed on Him for taking the person away. By the way, did you ever notice that when someone is old and sick, people tend to say sympathetically that they were "called home", but when a young person dies, he was "struck down" or "taken"? The implication is that God is to blame for an untimely death. Now I know that not all Christians feel that way,

HEY, YOU KIDS!

but it happens. Here are some points to remember: life is fragile and can be over in a split second. Death can come by almost any means and has no feelings about those left behind.

But why? Why would a kind, loving, and just God make a world where death reigns? The answer is, He didn't. If you check up in the Scriptures you'll find that death is not mentioned until after Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and ignoring His warning not to eat of the tree of knowledge, lest they die. They were punished by being forced to leave the Garden of Eden, but did they die right away? No, but to be apart from God is to be apart from His life — and the absence of life is death! Adam and Eve faced spiritual death because of their disobedience, and their bodies actually began to die from that day.

But that leads us to more questions. Didn't Jesus die? Yes, after He took our sins. And if He took our sins then why do we die anyway? Because our bodies are part of the fallen creation, it was our souls that were restored to grace, not our physical bodies.

Well, then what about the creation? If God knew what was going to happen, why would He have made a world that He knew would go wrong? I'm not really sure about that, but apparently He thought it worth making, in order to have souls formed in His likeness

(Genesis 1:26; 1 John 4:7-9), capable of receiving His love and of loving Him in return.

What about justice and fairness? Isn't God supposed to be the Good Lord who loves righteousness and rewards it with good things? Yes, but our human righteousness is our obedient faithfulness, and even Christians are not perfect. We also live in a broken world, so God has to work among many things that come into our lives.

Well, then, what about goodness? Finally a good question. We must now determine what is "good" and what is "bad". In deciding whether something is good or bad, one must look at the entire picture of life. When I see only a fraction of what's really going on, I may feel one way or another, but a poorly informed opinion is a poor opinion altogether. For example, is rapid cell growth a good thing or bad thing? If you had only that statement to work off of you couldn't tell me. Because if you're hurt and the rapid cell growth is part of healing, then it's good. However, if rapid cell growth is a cancer, it's bad. One helps a life; one destroys it.

Or how about being cut with a knife? If I'm peeling potatoes then getting cut is a bad thing, whereas if the cutting is done by a doctor, the chances are it will help me. Yet both events cause hurt to my body. Why, then, is one good and one bad? It is

HEY, YOU KIDS!

no longer the means but the end we look to for the answer, and for that you must see the entire picture.

So if the above examples are clear to you, then my question is why is it so hard for people to accept the “bad” things in life? By this I mean, we as people will injure ourselves by our foolish choices or will be hurt by the choices of others. And at times there may be hurt or sickness in our lives that needs healing. But God’s role in all pain is the same. He is called the Great Physician because He brings about healing.

Though pain came into the world because of sin, God uses it to heal the wounds in our lives and, through the lessons of pain, we grow. For a personal example, I had a girlfriend of several years and we broke up. It hurt a good bit, but I learned dependence on God and more of forgiveness. I’ve had times when I have been wronged by others, but I learned about grace during those times. I have lost good friends to sickness and violence, but I learned to savor life and make each day count as if it was my last. I have sinned and been lost in the world, but then I learned how Christ is the Good Shepherd.

I take the most comfort in this, that no matter how bad life may be, the things of this world are nothing in comparison to the things that He has in store for those who love Him. *“For I consider that the sufferings of*

this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

When I say “the things in this world are not worthy to be compared”, I’m not talking about the bad things; I mean the best things. So if the best experiences will be as nothing compared to the next world, the worst experiences won’t be worth mentioning. It’s because of these things, that I can smile during some of my worst days, because I know God doesn’t let His people slip through the cracks, and that He will wipe every tear from our eyes if we let Him. This is one of the reasons why I cannot wait to go!

I encourage you guys to do a bit of praying and see how God answers, do a bit of reading and see what He says, and spend a bit of time being quiet to listen to that still small voice of His Word as it speaks to your heart’s needs. It’s worth it. Anyway, take care and God bless. Write me if you have any comments or questions. †

PS: email zex1@hotmail.com. Put something like “article comments” as the subject, just to grab my attention.

Alex Gibson is currently in the US Army, stationed at Fort Campbell, KY, USA.

HEY, YOU KIDS!

Mission Work

Heidi Sloan

Paraphrased, God's people said in Joshua 1:16, what you command us we will do, where you send us, we will go. God commanded us, in Mark 16:15, to go into the world and preach the Gospel. One way of preaching the Gospel is mission work. Some mission evangelism activities include door-knocking, VBS, and good works.

We invite people to worship or to study personally with us when we door-knock. Through our evangelistic efforts, we can be satisfied as we help a lost soul find Christ. In Matthew 5:41, we are encouraged to go the extra mile. This makes me think, "When door-knocking, go all the way! Don't just give up after a few doors because nobody is answering."

VBS helps children learn of Christ. Proverbs 22:6 says, "*Train up a child in the way he should go.*" VBS helps teach children the right way they should live when there isn't an adult Christian role model as an influence.

On mission trips, we are sent to



communities where churches are in need. Faith without works cannot get you into heaven (James 2:17). That is why on mission trips we do good works, including: repainting a sign for a church building, cleaning inside the building, and helping the older members with household maintenance.

Mission evangelism sends us to preach God's will to all who will hear. Door-knocking, VBS, and good works are effective ways of letting our Christian light shine, so that all who see us will know that we want to do God's will (John 4:34). †

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Learning from Church History

Bruce Daughtery

A study of church history can be very beneficial for Christians today. Some people believe that there is nothing to be gained by studying the past. However, God does not view history this way. *“The things written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4). J. W. Shepherd, a preacher and historian, once wrote, “If God overrules in human affairs, and teaches men by means of history, then he who faithfully records historic facts fulfills an important service in the education of men.” (Preface to *The Church, The Falling Away, and the Restoration*).

One of the lessons we can learn from the past is that an individual has great power to change or influence his or her society. Many people today discount the power of the individual. Some are not motivated to serve the Lord unless they can join a big move-

ment or follow millions of supporters. They might even express this sentiment by saying, “I am just one individual. It does not matter what I do.” This type of reasoning demonstrates a lack of faith in what God can do through individuals. It also ignores the history of countless individuals whose actions have made a difference for the cause of Christ.

Consider two examples from church history and how they relate to the availability of the Bible to the average person. The first example is seen in the work of Jerome. Jerome was commissioned to prepare a new translation of the Bible into Latin in the fourth century after Christ. The previous Latin versions proved to have many manuscript defects. Jerome’s work took many years and required him to learn Hebrew as well as Greek, but in 404 AD, he completed his translation. Initially, Jerome’s new Bible was not well re-

CHURCH HISTORY

ceived. Jerome complained bitterly, “They like their versions to be pretty, not accurate.” In time, however, Jerome’s work was recognized for the good that it accomplished. His translation, called the Vulgate, became the Bible for western civilization for more than 1,000 years! The English versions of today, as well as modern Bible translations in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and other languages, developed from Latin; all have had their form and vocabulary molded by Jerome’s Vulgate translation.



The second example is that of William Tyndale. Tyndale was an Englishman living at the dawn of the Reformation. He had been influenced by the work of John Wycliffe to put the Bible into the language of the common man. Not everyone in the medieval world believed that this was a good idea. One time, an English priest told Tyndale that men would be better having the laws of the Pope rather than the

laws of God. Tyndale responded by saying that if God spared his life, he would make it so that the boy driving a plow would know more Scripture than the priest knew. Due to religious persecution, Tyndale had to leave his native country to complete his work. His first New Testament was finished in 1525 A.D., and the book had to be smuggled into England. Eventually, more than 50,000 copies were circulated there. Tyndale was later betrayed by a friend, and at the orders of the king of England, he was executed on October 6, 1536. Before his death at a stake of fire he prayed, “Lord, open the eyes of the King.” It has been estimated that more than 90% of the New Testament, as translated by Tyndale, was incorporated into the King James Version of the Bible.

Though long dead and unknown to most people today, Jerome and Tyndale, along with many other individuals, contributed to the availability of the Bible in the language of the common person. These were two men who made an impact, not only in their day and time, but also on those who have followed them through the centuries.

Dear Reader, let each one of us determine to do what we can for the cause of Christ. One individual *can* make a great difference! †

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Our Light in Darkness

Isaiah 9:2-6

Andy Jooste

Introduction

- A. Current doubt about the relevance of Jesus today.
- B. Oppression of darkness experienced in caves, exemplified in Assyrian captivity.

I. The cause and state of Israel's captivity, Isaiah 8:20-22.

- A. Israel's source of direction: "the living consulted the dead", v. 19.
- B. Hard-pressed, famine, failure of harvest, social breakdown, v. 21.
- C. Disappointment in leadership: v. 21; frustration with the king led to anger with God.
- D. No light at end of tunnel, "no dawn", vs. 20,22; all just "doom and gloom"?

II. Application to contemporary cultures.

- A. Breakdown of social order, home, economy: futility of post-modernism, Ephesians 4:17.
- B. TV produced ignorance, intellectual confusion, moral disorientation, Matthew 6:23.
- C. Carnality, violence, bondage, 2 Peter 2:18-20.

III. The light we find in Christ; contrasts in Isaiah 9:2-6.

- A. Light that cannot be overwhelmed, John 1:4,5.
- B. Light that gives direction, "light of life", 2 Peter 1:19.
- C. Light that satisfies, John 10:10; Philippians 4:19.

Conclusion:

- A. That light is accessible, 1 Peter 1:18-25.
- B. Illustration of man leading people out of dark room with a candle, John 8:12.
- C. Come to the light, John 3:16-21. †

Andy Jooste labors for the Lord in the Republic of South Africa.

The Ending of Mark



Until the mid-15th century (when the printing press was invented), biblical documents were copied by hand. While human error inevitably led to differences among the multiplied thousands of copies, the science of Textual Criticism seeks to identify the variants and determine the original wording of the text. Most discrepancies involve relatively minor details (e.g. spelling, reduplication, word order, etc.) that can readily be explained, and no fundamental doctrine of the Bible is in doubt because of textual uncertainty.

One of the more significant textual variants concerns the ending of the Gospel of Mark, with basically three different endings in the extant manuscripts. The vast majority contain the full twenty verses (i.e. the traditional ending). However, in some manuscripts the Gospel ends at 16:8. These include the two oldest complete copies of the New Testament (the 4th century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), although in Vaticanus an empty space follows verse 8, leaving room for the verses in question. Why the passage is missing and whether or not the omission was intentional cannot be verified. Several late manuscripts include a “shorter ending” following 16:8, though all but one continue with verses 9-20. While the difficulty is not easily resolved, most agree that 16:8 provides an abrupt, clumsy ending with no record of a personal appearance of the risen Christ.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The traditional ending of Mark is considerably earlier than Irenaeus (late 2nd century), who regarded verses 9-20 as part of the original (*Adv. Haer.* 3.10.6). A number of ancient versions (e.g. the Peshito Syriac, the Old Italic, the Sahidic, the Coptic) contain verses 9-20, and these predate both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Apparently the Greek texts from which these ancient versions were translated contained the passage in question. While Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are highly esteemed by many as the two oldest texts of the New Testament, this in itself does not guarantee their accuracy. W. N. Pickering observes: “But the evidence indicates that the earliest [manuscripts] are the worst. It is clear that the Church in general did not propagate the sort of text found in the earliest [manuscripts], which demonstrates that they were not held in high esteem in their day” (*Identity of the NT Text* 122).

Vaticanus and Sinaiticus often diverge from one another, with one or the other agreeing with the 5th-century Codex Alexandrinus. Text critics normally accept the readings that are



supported by Alexandrinus and one of the other manuscripts, at times siding with Alexandrinus against the other two. Alexandrinus contains the last twelve verses of Mark 16. These verses bear strong affinities to the other Gospel accounts of the resurrection (i.e. the information is genuine) and serve as a fitting epilogue. Allen Black notes in his commentary on Mark that “the material in vv. 9-20 is in harmony with the other Gospels and may be studied with profit. . . . it is important not to overrate the significance of the problem. There is no doctrine or practice discussed in vv. 9-20 that is not taught elsewhere in the New Testament” (288, 293). Nonetheless, the tenacity of these verses in being included in nearly all current standard Greek texts and translations bears testimony to their apparent authenticity. †

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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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. — (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

The Canon of Sacred Scripture

Wayne Jackson

Bible scholars refer to the “canon” of the Scriptures. What is meant by that expression? The term “canon” is an anglicized form of the Greek *kanon*. Originally, the word had to do with a straight rod or rule, to which a builder would compare his work for trueness.

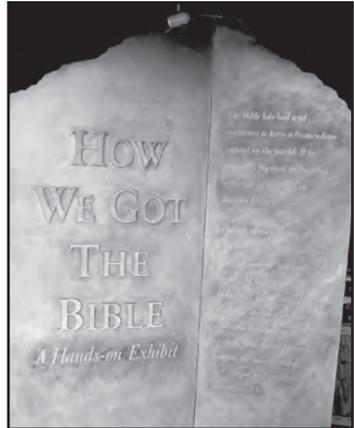
Gradually, the term came to be employed figuratively of a “norm or standard”. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul referred to the “rule” (*kanon*) by which Christians are expected to live (6:16). Eventually, the expression came to signify that which has “passed the test”. When, therefore, the word is applied to the books of the Bible, it denotes those documents that, over a period of time, have passed the test of critical examination, and hence, warrant the designation “sacred Scripture”. In his Commentary on Matthew, Origen (c. A.D. 185-254), one of the Greek “church fathers”, alluded to the “canonized Scriptures” (Sec. 28). Today, the “Canon” refers to those 66 books that constitute the common Bible.

However, this introduces several questions. Who determined which books were to go into the Bible? Exactly when did that occur? What are the Apocryphal books?

The Standard of Determination

The question of: “Which books belong in the Bible?” was determined gradually and on the basis of evidence. By “gradually”, we mean that there was not a definite historical date when a synod or council made a determination — “these are the true biblical books!” Rather, over a period of years, by the application of reasonable tests, the documents truly inspired were separated from those works that are spurious. The evidence leading to this decision is classified as external and internal.

External evidence has to do with the testimony of those who had access to the documents originally. How did they view them, and why? Internal



TEXTUAL STUDIES

evidence relates to the nature of the material itself. Does it claim to be from God? Is it internally consistent? Does it harmonize with other documents that are perceived to be inspired? Is it characterized by a lofty tone (i.e., that “essence” which one would expect in a narrative that claims inspiration)? Does it bear the marks of factual accuracy? These sorts of things, as applied by reasonable minds, ultimately separated the genuinely sacred books from those unworthy of that recognition.

Old Testament Books

Jewish tradition traces the collection of the Old Testament books to the time of Ezra (mid-5th century B.C.). It may have been a while later before the entire “canon” was actually recognized. By the time of Christ was born, there were two versions of the Old Testament.

The Hebrew canon consisted of the 39 books that currently make up our Old Testament — though in the Palestinean version, they numbered only 24 (due to a different arrangement — some books being combined).

The Septuagint version (a Greek translation from the 3rd/2nd centuries B.C., symbolized by LXX) contained various other documents that were “bound up” with the regular 39 books of the Hebrew Bible (the number of these extra books varying in different editions). While these additional books, called the Apocrypha, reflected some historical matters, they were not perceived as “inspired” by God, and significantly, were never sanctioned by Christ or any New Testament writer. Some of them, though, are incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible.

One of the most significant evidences for the sacred nature of the Old Testament books is the manner in which they are quoted, or alluded to, in the New Testament, having the sanction of Christ and His sacred penmen.

According to one computation (Horn 173), the New Testament contains 433 direct quotations from the Old Testament. No less than 30 of the 39 books are definitely quoted, with numerous additional allusions. Moreover, it is not just the fact that the Old Testament is quoted, it is the way in which it is quoted that is significant. The technical phrase, “It is written” (used of an inspired work, cf. Thayer 121) is employed in 73 New Testament passages. In some 21 New Testament passages, the Old Testament documents are referred to as “Scripture”. Quotations from at least 11 of the Old Testament books are attributed to God or the Holy Spirit. For example, Peter, quoting from Psalm 69, says that “*it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David*” (Acts 1:16ff). In some 46

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New Testament passages, the names of 10 Old Testament books (or authors) are mentioned. Again, let us emphasize that no Apocryphal book from the LXX is given endorsement, even though the New Testament writers were familiar with these books.

New Testament Books

The New Testament authors considered their writings to be as authoritative as those of the Old Testament Scriptures. For example, Paul quotes from the Book of Deuteronomy (25:4), and the Gospel of Luke (10:7), and classifies these as “scripture” (1 Timothy 5:17). Peter places “all” of Paul’s “epistles” in the same category as “the other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). The word “other” translates the Greek *loiapos* which denotes “the rest of any number or class under consideration” (Thayer 382). Too, note how Peter puts the “apostles” in the same category as the “holy prophets” of Old Testament fame (2 Peter 3:2).

The ancient church was unanimous in its acceptance of most of the New Testament books; for a while there was some dispute over James, 2nd and 3rd John, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation. Too, during this time period (2nd and 3rd centuries), other books that had generated some interest (e.g., the “Epistle of Barnabas,” the “Shepherd of Hermas”) were being eliminated. By the 4th century, it was a settled issue that the currently accepted 27 books of our New Testament, and only these, are canonical.

It was not a matter of any official council “deciding” which books would be acknowledged as “inspired”; it was a matter of critically examining, sorting, sifting, and identifying what had become perfectly obvious.

The writings of the New Testament were so profusely quoted by the antenicene “fathers” (A.D. 325 and back), that it is said that if the whole New Testament were destroyed, it could be reproduced entirely from their citations — with the exception of about a dozen verses (Hastings 12).

Conclusion

We may have every confidence, therefore, that the sixty-six books that compose our present Bible are the true embodiment of the Word of God. †

Endnotes

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Horn, S.H. (1960), *SDA Bible Dictionary* (Washington: Review & Herald).

Thayer, J.H. (1958), *Greek-English Lexicon* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark).

Baptism and the Deity of Christ

E. Claude Gardner

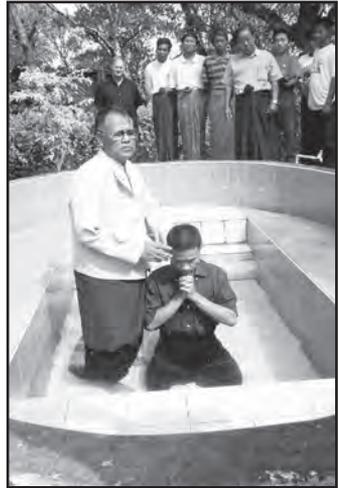
Here is a question raised by a preacher. “Is one’s view of baptism as important as one’s view on the deity of Christ?” Obviously the preacher would answer, “No,” because he is not convinced that baptism is a command of God in order to be saved.

Here are some questions:

- Does a human being have the right and power to determine what is less or more important?
- Should one believe that all doctrines of the Bible are inspired?
- Should we love all the Bible — from beginning to end?
- How does Paul relate baptism to the deity of Christ? He relates it to His resurrection.

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:3-5).

We must be baptized to get into Christ, the divine Savior. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26,27 †*



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Why Do the Righteous Suffer?

Tim D. Shoemaker

We all suffer in life. None can escape it, and when it happens men are most prone to ask or at least wonder, “Why me?” That’s not an easy question to answer, for not all people will suffer for the same reason. Job suffered greatly, and he was unable to understand why. His friends were convinced that they had the answer: “You are suffering because you have sinned.” Yet that was not the correct answer, and Job knew that. He pled with God that He might answer him. God did speak, but He did not explain why Job was suffering as he was. In our lives, we do not know the “why” of suffering many times, but we do know some of the reasons why God allows it.

Sometimes God allows us to suffer in order that we might turn to Him. When man is able to answer his questions, and handle his problems, he feels no need for God and may turn away from Him. However, let some problem enter his life that he cannot handle and he often will turn to God. King David certainly seemed to understand that aspect of suffering. In Psalm 119, in verse 67 and again in verse 71, he acknowledged the value of suffering in his life. He declared, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”* *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”* Just as the goodness of God is meant to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4), so also “the purpose of all human sorrow is that it might turn men unto God.”

It was the suffering that David endured that led him to learn and to keep God’s law. Such suffering was not punitive, but it was corrective. It was meant to lead David back to God, and it had its desired effect. God’s great desire for mankind in general, and for you as an individual, is not your punishment, but your salvation. God will punish if we refuse to obey, but His desire is to bless. Hell was not created for man, but for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). The kingdom was prepared for us (Matthew 25:35). Yet, to prepare us for the kingdom it may be necessary that we endure afflictions here. Just recently I read a story by author, James H. Brookes. He told of visiting a friend’s house and hearing the music of a bird singing. It was not the ordinary

BIBLE QUESTIONS

sound of chirping; instead it resembled the strains of a lovely melody. At first Brookes didn't know from where it was coming; but when he glanced around the room, he saw a beautiful bullfinch in a birdcage. The lady of the house explained that it had been taught to sing that way at night. The teacher would repeat the notes time and again until the bird was able to mimic them. This was possible only because it was dark and the bird's attention would not be diverted. He then concluded, "How often we learn our sweetest songs when the blackness of trial closes in around us."

At the time of such suffering it may be difficult, if not impossible, to understand and certainly to appreciate what is happening, but hopefully we will do so later. Paul declared, "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*" (Hebrews 12:11) †



Tim D. Shoemaker works with the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

The Bar vs. The Church

In a small midwestern conservative town, a business owner began to construct a building for a new bar. The local Baptist church started a campaign to block the bar from opening with petitions and prayers.

Work progressed, however, right up until the week before opening, when a lightning strike hit the bar and it burned to the ground.

The church folks were rather smug in their outlook after that, until the bar owner sued the church on the grounds that the church was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building, either through direct or indirect actions or means.

In its reply to the court, the church vehemently denied all responsibility or any connection to the building's demise.

As the case made its way into court, the judge looked over the paperwork at the hearing and commented, "I don't know how I'm going to decide this, but as it appears from the paperwork, we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer, and an entire church congregation that doesn't!"

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Was Barnabas an Apostle?

Cecil May, Jr.

He was and he wasn't. In Acts 14:4 Paul and Barnabas are called "the apostles". *Apostles* is an anglicized Greek word meaning "one sent on a mission". It implies having authority to carry out the mission.

The word was in general use in the first century, sometimes translated *messengers*: "And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 8:23b), referring to appointees from the churches that had made contributions to the churches of Judea.

In addition, Paul wrote "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need" (Philippians 2:25). Epaphroditus had been "sent on a mission" by the Philippian church to bring aid to Paul. He and the "our brothers" of the Corinthian correspondence were "apostles" of the churches which had sent them.

Barnabas and Saul were "apostles"

of the Antioch church that had sent them on their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26).

In second century literature, "apostles" is the word for traveling preachers planting churches in new areas, corresponding to the meaning of our word *missionaries*. Missionary is related to the Latin word for "sent", in approximately the same way that apostle is related to the Greek word for sent. Again, they were "apostles" of the churches that sent them.

The twelve men Jesus appointed, trained, and commissioned are "apostles of Christ." Though sometimes just called "apostles" or even just "the twelve", the context will show when "apostles of Christ" are the ones meant.

When Judas fell from that office, Peter made it clear that his successor had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:21,22). When Saul of Tarsus was appointed an "apostle of Christ out of due season", Jesus appeared to him so that he could meet that qualification. The authority of an apostle comes from the one who "sent" or "commissioned" him; so it is important to know whether or not an "apostle" is an "apostle of Christ". An "apostle of Christ" speaks with the authority of Christ Himself. †

Cecil May, Jr. is Dean of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Is There Anything to a Name?

Jodie Boren



An Associated Press report from Ocean Springs, Mississippi revealed that restaurant owner Kikone Unknown, 40, acquired that name when he immigrated to the United States from Laos in 1979 and feared revealing his real name to American officials, who simply listed his last name as “unknown.” He remains “unknown,” and it matters little to the world.

There is one, however, who has changed the world with His message of salvation and hope. Almighty God has *“highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Contrary to the teaching of man in an effort to justify the wearing of denominational names, names are important. God obviously places much importance in the name of Jesus. It was to Jesus, and to Jesus *only* that all authority in heaven and on earth was given (Matthew 28:18). In His name — or by His authority — are we to follow God.

It is in the name of Jesus that we are to pray (John 14:13 and 16:23). It was in the name of Jesus that the apostles performed miracles (Acts 3:6). In His name, the name of Jesus, we are to preach the Gospel (Luke 24:47). It is in His name that we are to have faith (Matthew 12:21; John 1:12; 2:23). It is through His name that we receive the remission of sins (Acts 10:43). Paul sums it up in Colossians 3:17 where he says, “*and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” Therefore, all that we do religiously must be by the authority of Jesus.

When a woman marries a man, she takes his name. For her to profess her love for him by marrying him and then to wear the name of an old boyfriend is unthinkable! By her actions she would deny her words. In the spiritual realm, the church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23; 2 Corinthians 11:2). When we “marry” our Lord through our love for Him and by our obedience to His commands, we take His name. Can anyone honestly believe that as the bride of Christ, we would be pleasing to Him when we wear a denominational name of man?

The name Christian means an attachment to Christ. In this attachment, we become one, spiritually, in Christ (Galatians 3:28) just as a man and woman become one flesh (Matthew 19:5) in a physical marriage. Some would have us believe that the name Christian was given in derision by the Romans. That is blasphemy to say that God’s people wear a name given to them by the enemies of God! In Isaiah 62:2, we are told that the righteous will “*be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*” — not by the Romans or anyone else, but by the mouth of the Lord. In verse 12, these righteous are identified as the redeemed of the Lord. The name Christian has to be the fulfillment of this prophecy because only Christians — the children of God — are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:6,7).

Is there anything to a name? The answer is an emphatic, “Yes”. As we live our daily lives, may we wear this name of Christ proudly and do all things to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). †

Jodie Boren is a retired artist and Gospel preacher living in Hartville, Missouri, USA.

Amasiah

Dwight Fuqua



When was the last time you read 2 Chronicles? Right! Remember the reign of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah? Sure! Tucked away in the detailed history of King Jehoshaphat is reference to a man named Amasiah. I want to be like Amasiah. I want you to be like Amasiah, and so do you!

I was not impressed by the fact that Amasiah was the son of Zichri. I did not know the family. I was only slightly impressed by the fact that he commanded 200,000 mighty men of valor. However, when I read the one other description of Amasiah given in the Bible, it jumped off the page: *“and next to him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the Lord, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor”* (2 Chronicles 17:16). (I have highlighted the words in this article for emphasis, DF.) Amasiah **“willingly offered himself to the Lord.”** Go thou and do likewise!

We are talking consecration in its purest form! Paul exhorted Christians: *“And do not present your mem-*

bers as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:13). He later exhorted: *“For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness”* Romans 6:19).

The word “present” or “presented” (translated “yield” in the King James Version) appears four times in these two verses. It also appears in verse 16. The original word “paristemi” is most interesting. First, it is used of something sacrificed or consecrated to God. We sacrifice and consecrate ourselves to God! Second, it means “to place or stand beside”. When sides are chosen, we choose to take our stand beside God! Can you see yourself walking up and towing the line beside God? “Who will follow Jesus? Who will make reply, ‘I am on the Lord’s side; Master, here am I?’”

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Paul said that the Macedonians “*first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*” (2 Corinthians 8:5). This statement is in the context of giving. Paul’s point? One has no problem giving his money when he has given his life! The same is true in every area of Christian devotion and service. To serve God effectively, we must follow the example of the Macedonians. I can make you a promise: If you give yourself to the Lord, following Him will become a thing of joy and not drudgery.

We sing, “I am Thine, O Lord” and “Consecrate me to Thy service, Lord”. Great song! Great sentiment! One of my favorites! But Amasiah did more than sing — he committed! He “*willingly offered himself to the Lord.*” I want to be like Amasiah! Five minutes ago you did not know him. Now, hopefully you, too, want to be like Amasiah! †

Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay congregation in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

“Mary and Martha”

Julene Nulph

Mary and Martha: Martha and Mary.

Two sisters are they, yet their views are contrary.

One sister sits at the Master’s feet.

The other one worries, what will her guests eat!

Mary and Martha: Martha and Mary.

Two sisters are they — one is calm one is weary.

One sister scurries about in a rush

The other one listens in the still silent hush.

Two sisters trying to put forth their best.

One is so busy and one is at rest.

One sister wants to make her home so clean

The other wants wisdom from Jesus to glean.

Two sisters whose views of both I can see,

One sets the table and gets water for tea.

The other puts spiritual things ahead of the rest

Two differing views, yet which sister was blessed?”



O Mighty Man of Valor

Danny Boggs

“The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years” (Judges 6:1).

Evil had become the norm among the people God had chosen as His special possession. Knowing the one true God and being promised His

BIBLE CHARACTERS

blessings was not enough to keep them on the straight and narrow. God let them suffer the consequences.

Yet, God wasn't done with His people. *“Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, ‘The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor’”* (Judges 6:11,12).

God had a plan, and Gideon was central to it. Having heard the first of it, Gideon responded, *“Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house”* (Judges 6:15).

I'm like Gideon. If the angel of the Lord appeared to me and said, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor,” I would be more surprised at being called a mighty man of valor than at seeing the angel of the Lord!

The valiant warrior was in a winepress, keeping as low a profile as possible and wondering where the Lord had gone. Even after his interchange with the heavenly being, Gideon asked for additional proof that God really intended to use him mightily.

Gideon stayed nervous, but used his nervous energy to obey. Following the first of God's instructions, he tore down idols to a false god and a false goddess. Previously, in times of widespread faithfulness, one who worshipped Baal and Asherah in Israel would have feared for his life (Deuteronomy 13:6-10). However, the tables had turned. Now, Gideon had to defeat the disloyal spirit of his own people before he could lead them against intruding enemies.

Reluctant as he was, Gideon persisted in obedience. He was awarded the name Jerubaal, “Contender with Baal”. God did what He said He could do through Gideon. The valiant warrior kept a finger in the dike for forty years, holding back the aggressive Midianites and limiting Israel's apostasy.

The truth is, all of us have our weaknesses and limitations. However, God has always used ordinary people in extraordinary ways. We have no valid excuses for holding back the work the Lord would do through us. He can make us mighty men and women of valor. *“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). †

Danny Boggs is a Gospel preacher working with the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

Are we willing to tear down the “idols” in our life,
in order to exclusively serve the only true and living God?

BIBLE CHARACTERS

The Life of Moses: Forty Years in Five Verses

(Hebrews 11:23-27)

Ardron Hinton

The main fact in his life: He made the right choice concerning its direction.

- (What does it matter how smooth or swift the ride if you're headed wrong?)
- His Choices: "*Affliction with the people of God*" or "*The passing pleasures of sin*".
- (He apparently made up his mind on reaching adulthood, but for twenty years the full effect of his choice was not felt. Finally, full truth had to be faced and bridges had to be burned. At 40, the duties of leadership were unavoidable, so which way would he lead?)

What had he given up? Everything the world considers most important:

- Pleasure — Possessions — Prominence — Power
- (He gave up: being a prince to become a shepherd, living in a palace to live in a tent, being a citizen of mighty Egypt to being a citizen of a tribe of wilderness nomads.)

This brings us to Two Main Questions: WHY did he do it? HOW did he do it?

- (Actually, the same facts answer both questions.) The key word is FAITH. He did it because of what he believed. He was able to do it because of how strongly he believed it. Let's take a closer look at his FAITH.

Facts from the Text:

- His faith rested on dependable teaching. (His physical mother was his nursemaid, Exodus 2:7,8).
- His faith enabled him to see beyond the physical present world ("*seeing Him who is invisible*").
- His faith caused him to acknowledge God's power as being far above Pharaoh's. ("*not fearing the wrath of the king*" — like his parents before him.)
- His faith helped him understand the limited benefits of sin. (He chose God's favor instead of "*the passing pleasures of sin*".)

With tremendous influence to choose wrong, Moses made the right choice. Each has to accept personal responsibility. How carefully are WE choosing? †

Ardron Hinton works with the church in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. **100** My grandfather was a king (2 Samuel 4:4).
2. **90** My father's best friend was a king (1 Samuel 18:3; 20:42).
3. **80** I was an Israelite who became crippled at age five (2 Samuel 4:4).
4. **70** I became crippled when I was fleeing for my life after the death of my father and grandfather (2 Samuel 4:4).
5. **60** As an adult, I was brought to the palace by my father's best friend (2 Samuel 9:1-6).
6. **50** The king took care of me because of a promise he made to my father many years before (2 Samuel 9:7).
7. **40** When the king restored my father's lands to me, I showed him respect and thankfulness instead of demanding more as "my due" (2 Samuel 9:8).
8. **30** When my servant lied to the king about me, I did not seek revenge (2 Samuel 16:1-3; 9:24-27).
9. **20** The king was David.
10. **10** My father was Jonathan; my grandfather was King Saul (2 Samuel 4:4)..



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

- 1. 100** I am a prominent feature on a map of Palestine.
- 2. 90** A great spiritual battle between God and Satan was fought here (1 Kings 18:17-46).
- 3. 80** One "god" did nothing, while Jehovah performed a great miracle through His prophet.
- 4. 70** Fire consumed wood, stone, the sacrificial animal, and water.
- 5. 60** Four-hundred-fifty false prophets were killed after God's response to the offering.
- 6. 50** The prophet then asked God to send rain, and it rained for the first time in three years.
- 7. 40** The victory over the false prophets caused the queen to threaten to kill the prophet of God by the next day (1 Kings 19:2).
- 8. 30** The king of Israel at the time was Ahab, and the queen was Jezebel.
- 9. 20** Elijah was the prophet of God.
- 10. 10** Baal was the false god.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

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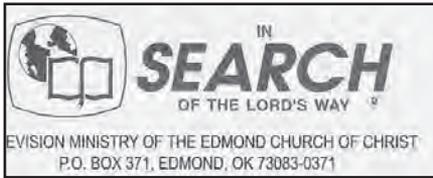


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Verse Search (from Page 21)

1. Adam; Through sin.
2. All sinned.
3. Sin. Sin is not counted where there is no law.
4. Adam.
5. What Adam did affected all of mankind, and what Christ did affected all of mankind even more.
6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ.
7. Judgment resulting in condemnation. Justification.
8. Reign in life through Jesus.
9. Righteous.
10. Judged to be right.
11. The offenses abounded.
12. Grace abounded even more.
13. Make us more ready to receive God's grace.
14. "righteousness" through "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Who Am I? (page 107)

Mephibosheth

Where Am I? (page 108)

Mount Carmel

Bible Find (from Page 52)



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