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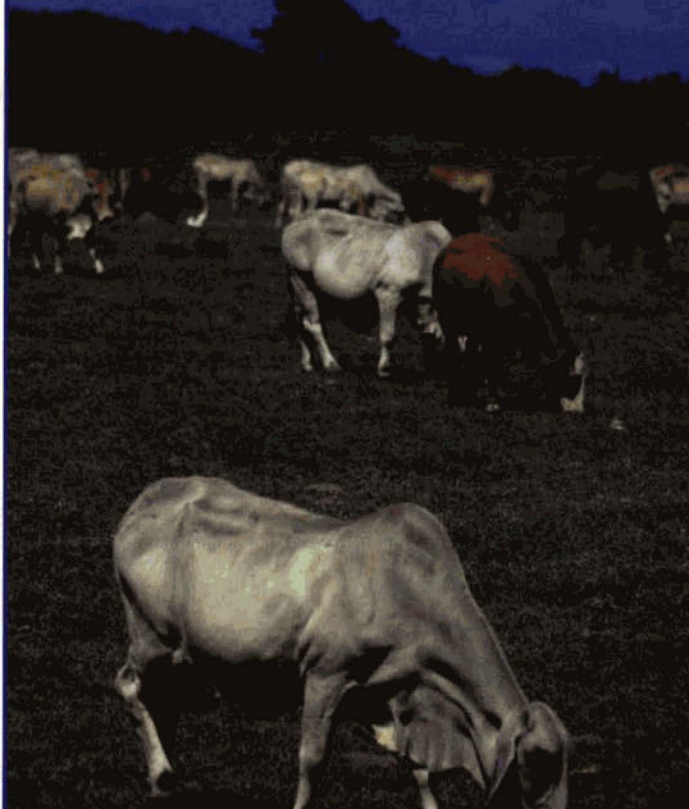
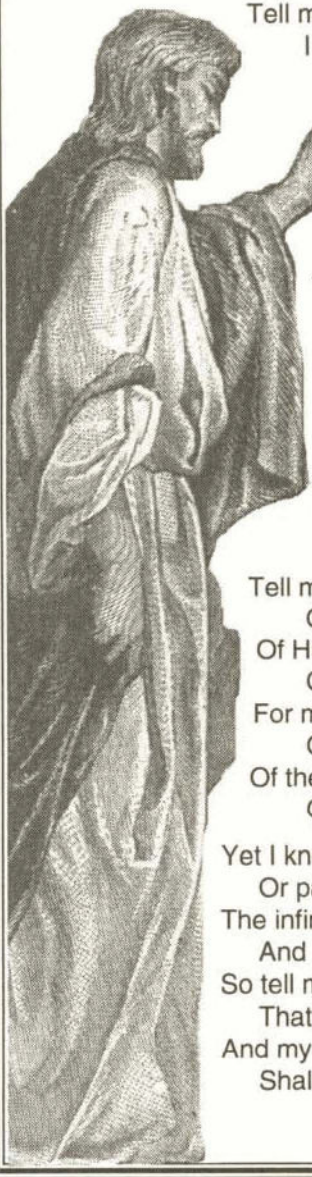


Tell Me About the Master



Tell me about the Master;
I am weary and worn tonight,
The day lies behind me in shadow,
And only the evening is light!
Light with a radiant glory
That lingers about the west,
My poor heart is aweary, aweary,
And longs, like a child, for rest.

Tell me about the Master!
Of the hills He in loneliness trod,
When the tears and the blood of His anguish
Dropped down on Judea's sod.
For to me life's seventy mile-stones
But a sorrowful journey mark;
Rough lies the hill-country before me,
The mountains behind me are dark.

Tell me about the Master!
Of the wrongs He freely forgave;
Of His love and tender compassion,
Of His love that was mighty to save;
For my heart is aweary, aweary
Of the woes and temptations of life,
Of the error that stalks in the noonday,
Of the falsehood and malice and strife.

Yet I know that, whatever of sorrow
Or pain or temptation befall,
The infinite Master has suffered,
And knoweth and pitieth all.
So tell me the sweet, old story
That falls on each wound like a balm,
And my heart that was bruised and broken
Shall grow patient and strong and calm.

— Anonymous

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18 Editions

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

The churches of Christ salute you (Romans 16:16).

WHERE WOULD WE BE IF WE HAD NOT BECOME CHRISTIANS?

J. C. Choate
Editor-in-Chief

Have you every wondered where we might be if we had not become Christians and members of the Lord's church? If we had not obeyed the Lord, to let Him change our lives, **who** would we be today? **Where** would we be? **What** would we be doing? Would we even be alive?

Look at the Apostles and other well-known men and women of the Scriptures; look at all of those who became great servants of God, people of renown through the ages, because their stories are written in God's Book. What would have happened to them if they had not submitted their lives to the Lord's will?

For instance, in the great history of mankind, what would the lowly fisherman, Peter, have ever amounted to without the Lord?

If Saul had not been converted, what would have been his end?

Not only did it make a difference to initially obey the Lord, but faithfulness was vital. Consider some who fell along the way. Judas is a prime example. What a difference his faithlessness made, comparing his end with that of the other Apostles. Then there is the story of Ananias and Sapphira and how they were struck dead by the Holy Spirit for their lying. What about Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament? Also, even the great Pharaoh failed when he opposed God, and Herod was struck down by the angel of the Lord when he spoke with such grandness that the people proclaimed it was the voice of God and not of man, and he did not give God glory.

If we had not responded to the Lord's will, not only would we be lost,

but we might have been satisfied to settle down with some mediocre job, to have married and divorced and married again, to have become a drunkard, to become a drug addict, to develop a habit of cursing, to get into all kinds of trouble.

Even if we had not gone in some of those directions, we might still have ended up amounting to nothing, our lives making no positive difference in this world. In other words, we could have just lived and died, and ended up being lost for all eternity. Now wouldn't that have been horrible?

But though we became a Christian, if we had not been faithful, we would have ended up losing our soul, going back into the world, living a life of sin and deceit, perhaps joining some erring religious group, and living in opposition to the Lord's way. It is frightening even to think of such things.

What a contrast when we become God's children! Many Christians go on to become successful and prominent in the world. They succeed in business, become leaders in their community, are highly educated, and heads of Schools, Colleges, and Universities. There are numerous other areas where they may see great success, primarily because they are Christians and live by those principles.

The problem, however, is that even Christians are often prone to be blind as to *how they reached this place in life.* They are likely to take full credit themselves and to say, "Look what I have done, what I have been able to accomplish!" Many people out in the world do succeed, but one who has become a Christian is far more likely to have success when he applies the principles of Christianity to his life, while refraining from practices that are not in keeping with truth and right.

When one becomes a Christian, he changes his life. He looks at the world in a different way. He has Christ and the principles of Christianity to follow, giving him goals to reach. He is a hard worker, has respect for those with whom he works, is honest in dealing with others, and tries to do the best job possible. He is associated with Christians who will help and encourage him to succeed. His physical life, and the lives of his family members, have changed. They don't abuse their bodies with what they eat and drink, or with their manner of life, so they usually have better health. They are able to spend their money on education, business, and other worthwhile things since they don't waste it on strong drink, gambling, and bad habits.

So where would we be if it had not been for Christianity which changed our lives, our future in this world, and where we will spend eternity?

Do you have something to live for and to die for? I encourage you to be a Christian and let Christianity make your life an eternal success. ✞

SILENCE – BOTH SOOTHING AND DEAFENING

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

Isn't silence wonderful at times! It just seems as though there are times when our ears can get tired, just like our arms, legs, and back. After being bombarded with excessive noise, the soothing effect of silence can become a highly treasured blessing. In His humanity, even Jesus encountered this feeling. The Bible records various instances of His leaving the crowds for the opportunity to recuperate from the stress and turmoil in solitude and silence. He cherished those times when He could separate Himself from the multitudes and commune in quietness with the Father. Jesus urged His apostles to follow His example, as in Mark 6:30-32. Yes, silence can most assuredly be an oasis in the desert of life.

It is strangely true, however, that silence can sometimes be just as deafening as it is soothing at other times. There most definitely are times when silence is not what is needed, when it is totally inappropriate. This is verified by the wise and inspired words of Solomon when he said that there is *"a time to keep silence, and a time to speak"* (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Nevertheless, this raises the significant problem of determining when to be silent and when to speak. Please consider with me some situations in which the Scriptures call for our silence to be broken.

In the 30th Psalm, David reacts to the goodness of God in delivering him from trouble. David gratefully says, *"I will extol thee, O Jehovah; for thou hast raised me up ... To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Jehovah my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever"* (verses 1 and 12). In addition, he urges all of God's children to *"Sing praise*

unto Jehovah, O ye saints of his, And give thanks to his holy memorial name" (verse 4). The New Testament urges the same response to the goodness of God: *"Through him* [Christ] *then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name"* (Hebrews 13:15). The children of God must never be silent regarding the praise that is due to Him.

May the silence be broken by our standing up for what is right. Oh, that the Lord's people today would echo the sentiments of Peter and John as they adamantly declared, *"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). This same commitment is greatly needed in the church now. Elders and preachers especially are called upon to lead the church in standing with the Lord, regardless of the unpopularity that can result. Should those in positions of leadership fail to break the silence and speak up for what is right, however, that will not excuse any of the rest of us from courageously standing with our true Leader. The church of today, if it is to duplicate the boldness and concern of the early church, must be able to say with Paul, *"For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27).

Let us also never allow the existence of the deafening silence, which occurs when Christians fail to stand against that which is wrong. Standing for the right and standing against the wrong are indeed closely related, but they are not exactly the same. True conviction and courage are required in both situations, but I believe that it requires even greater fortitude and defiance of danger to speak out in opposition to that which is wrong. With today's spirit of tolerance, most anything can be advocated without the threat of reprisal or social rejection. It's usually allowed in the name of "the freedom of speech". Breaking the silence by openly opposing something or someone is quite another matter. Many in the world, as well as some even in the church, are generally exceptionally tolerant, but their tolerance becomes intolerance toward any who dare to speak up in an effort to show that an idea, a philosophy, or an action is in violation of God's will. What are Christians to do? Are we to compromise the truth in order to "get along"? Certainly not! We must speak with both our actions and our words in opposition to those things which God Himself opposes. We can know what those are by reading His Book. Silence can indeed be golden, but it also is sometimes just plain yellow.

Silence can be either soothing or deafening, depending on the situation. May we all courageously and boldly stand both for the truth and against error, but let us always *"speak the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15). ✝

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The Thief

Green, green land of trees
Towering overhead,
Forming an emerald canopy
Shading a velvet bed.
Blue, blue silken sky
Stretching away to the east,
Crowned with a golden halo,
Robed in a woolen fleece.
Bright, bright jewels of morning
Strewn through the open fields,
Decking the earth with grandeur
Never a thief could steal.

But stay —
He has come already
And stolen our wealth away:
Our trees he has wantonly slaughtered,
Blue skies he has painted gray,
The gold of the sun is tarnished,
The jewels are fading away!

"Who is the thief?" you question.
"Who would *dare* such a thing,
To rob the world of riches,
To silence the song it sings?"

Go — look in the streams polluted,
And see in the murky depth
The face of the culprit mirrored:
Mankind has robbed himself!

— Betty Burton Choate

The Place Of The Skull

Betty Tucker

We read in John 19:17 that *"He* (Jesus) *bearing His cross went forth into a place called the Place of the Skull, it is called in the Hebrew Golgotha."* We read further in Luke 23:33 that the site is called

Calvary in the Latin text.

Death on the cross was meted out to the vilest of criminals. It was a death without dignity, and full of pain. Usually the offenders were hanged near a thoroughfare, or at least in one of the more public places, for all to behold.

On the Lord's cross were inscribed the words *"The King of the Jews"* in three languages. It was written in Latin because Israel was controlled by the Roman government...in Greek because it was the universal language...and in Hebrew, the common language of Israel. Thus, any who looked upon the cross could decipher the inscription.

Prophecies Fulfilled

The robe of purple was given to Christ (an act of derision because they mocked Him, calling Him "king," and purple was the royal choice of color).

Soldiers cast lots for His garment (John 19:24), as had been prophesied in Psalm 22:18 — *"they part my garments among them...."*

Shortly before He died from the ravages of the cross, Jesus said, *"I thirst"* (John 19:28). This was a fulfillment of the prophesy in Psalm 69:21 — *"...and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."*

When the Passover Feast was instituted and divine ordinance given, they were instructed not to break a bone of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:46). Christ was our sacrificial lamb, so neither were His bones broken (John 19:36).

Let us look closely at Mark chapter 15 for details of the time frame of this awful event. He was raised on the cross at the third hour (verse 25). He uttered a loud cry (verse 37), and shortly after the ninth hour He breathed His last (verses 34, 37).

Sometimes men hanged upon the cross of execution, suffering cruel agonies for two or three days. Pilate expressed surprise that Jesus was already dead (verse 44).

When the soldiers discovered that He had finished the fight they pierced His side, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy — *"When they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn..."* (Zechariah 12:10).

We who are Christians are pained when we read of these cruel last hours in the life of our Lord. But we must remember them and the precious sacrifice that He willingly made on that hateful cross for us. We must never forget the events that transpired upon that hill that was so aptly called *"The Place of the Skull."* ✝

Betty Tucker is the wife of a gospel preacher, and they live in Linden, Tennessee, U.S.A.

God's Chosen One, THE CHRIST

Thomas R. Dohling

"...And the leaders made fun of Jesus, saying 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is God's chosen One, the Christ'" (Luke 23:35).

Jesus was grossly misunderstood by the religious leaders and the general public of His day. They simply failed to grasp that **it was precisely because Jesus was God's Chosen One — the Christ — that He *chose* not to save Himself;** *chose* to endure the insults, the pain, the humiliation, and suffering. Had He saved Himself, as He was quite capable of doing (Matthew 26: 53,54), we would have been lost forever. He came in *our* interest, not His own.

Actually, the Lord did not *have* to come, but He *wanted* to come in order to save us from the clutches of the Evil One. He did not come to earth just for the fun of it! He came for a purpose — to save humanity, us.

Death on the cross was *the only way* whereby we could be saved. Jesus is *the only way* whereby we could be saved.

Jesus was God's holy, chosen Lamb, set apart from the foundation of the world to be the perfect sacrifice that would take away our sins. Thus, He, the Lord of Life (John 5:26; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16ff), **submitted Himself to death on our behalf. He was slain from the creation of the world so that we could be in His book of life** (Revelation 13:8)!

Many times we fail to realize that we ought to be fashioned after Him. As He was submissive in all humility (Philippians 2:8b), we also must submit to scorn, insult, pain, humiliation, and suffering for Him (1:29) in order to be transformed into His image (2:5). As we grow in our Christian life, our focus should be more on Christ and less on ourselves until He becomes our **only focal point.**

Jesus must be our **Source of life.** The more we keep looking at the Source the more we will draw from Him, and out of us will flow rivers of living water influencing the lives of those around us, and bringing glory and honor to God. Then, no matter what Satan hurls at us through the world, we won't despair for we will be firmly founded in Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us. We will be convinced that He who could sacrifice so much for us **is surely mindful of us.** Knowing this, **we will never doubt, but fully trust Him Who is eternal life** (1 John 1:2). ✞

Thomas R. Dohling is a Christian in New Delhi, India.

The most significant event in the history of this planet was the resurrection three days after the death of Christ. If the resurrection did not take place as advertised, then Paul says our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

Four Imperatives of the Resurrection

Bobby Dockery

The resurrection was the greatest defeat Satan ever suffered; little wonder, then, that he should seek to discredit it and destroy people's faith in it.

But the resurrection really happened! It is the great reality of history. It will bear investigation! It will stand the test of scrutiny. When the two Marys came to the tomb on the morning after Christ rose they were greeted by an angel with these words: *"He is not here; for He is risen as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead"* (Matthew 28:6,7). In this statement there are four imperatives which still speak urgently to us across the expanse of twenty centuries.

1. "Come . . ." The resurrection offers us a great invitation. Jesus came to the world to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to call

men back to God. God does not *compel* us to serve Him; He *invites* us! We come by choice, not conscription. We come initially through obedience to the Gospel in the act of baptism (Romans 6:3,4). We must come to the empty tomb not just once a year, but *every day* in the thoughts we think and the lives we live. *"If you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above . . ."* (Colossians 3:1).

2. "See . . ." The resurrection urges verification. We are summoned to investigate. Probe! Weigh the evidence! The resurrection will stand scrutiny. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that the resurrected Christ was seen by more than 514 eye-witnesses. He was seen in broad daylight! Frightened, defeated, frustrated disciples became fearless preachers of the resurrection. People do not fearlessly die for a fraud! The blood of the martyrs speaks eloquently of the reality of the empty tomb. After 2000 years we can still "see" that Christ is risen!

3. "Go . . ." The resurrection places us under an obligation. We are called to undertake a mission. The two Marys were to *go and tell* the disciples the truth about the resurrection. Later, the risen Lord would send those disciples into the whole world to tell the news to every creature (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). The empty tomb demands mobility. We must be willing to "Go." In this world we have no continuing city. We are not here to settle down. Unfortunately, many Christians do not give the impression that they are on the go for God!

4. "Tell . . ." The resurrection demands proclamation! It is not a secret to be kept or knowledge to be hoarded, it is "good news" to be shared. **Jesus is risen!** *Men have a Savior!* ***Wake the world and tell the people!*** Say it in words as well as by deeds. It is not enough to commemorate the resurrection once a year! Every day in word and in deed we must proclaim the living Savior to a dying world, and on the first day of every week we proclaim His resurrection by the remembrance of His Supper!

Jesus rose from the dead and the world has never been the same since. The reality of the empty tomb can transform empty lives! But it little matters to you personally that Jesus rose from the dead if *you* have not been *raised with Him* (Romans 6:4,5). We must become participants in the resurrection through obedience to the Gospel.

Still the angel commands: **"Come . . . See . . . Go . . . Tell . . ."**! ✝

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preaches for the Baldwin Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Some important lessons for modern times can be learned from Paul's words recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:28-2:16. What the apostle wrote by inspiration certainly ranks among the most instructive

The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom

Hollis Miller

verses in the Bible. In them he declared that the message of the cross of Christ is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to all who are being saved.

The philosophers known to the Corinthians had been unable through their wisdom to deliver men from enslavement to moral and spiritual darkness. They had been unable to do so because their philosophic eyes were incapable of penetrating beyond the boundaries of human thought.

Had philosophy been able to deliver men from the realm of darkness into the realm of light surely the Greeks would have supplied the bridge. They could boast of some of the greatest thinkers ever to walk the earth. Yet their genius had utterly failed to provide men with the truth that sets them free.

In the scripture cited above, Paul declared that the cross of Christ is *God's wisdom*, the wisdom which the wise of this world think is foolishness. The apostle's statement is by no means limited to the first century world. Many today rejoice when the faith of Christians is attacked by theorists of various descriptions, slandered, or laughingly ridiculed. Yet Paul declared that it is these very people who are themselves acting foolishly.

What should the church today learn from 1 Corinthians 1:18 — 2:16? One obvious lesson is that when the Gospel is rejected, nothing can be

gained either for God or for men by turning to human wisdom for a substitute message. Another is that worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom do not equal each other. It is therefore a dangerous thing to assume that worldly learning within itself will better equip one to either proclaim the Gospel or to lead the church. Unless the wisdom gleaned from the wise of this world is supervised by heavenly wisdom one is poorly prepared to lead others into total faith in the sufficiency of the cross of Christ.

At Corinth the Gospel made its greatest appeal to those who were not enthralled by their own wisdom, power, and riches. Paul stated it thusly: *"For see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."* Just how this stated fact applies to different societies in different times may be a flexible matter, but experience seems to teach us that even today biased worldly wisdom, power, and wealth do not equip many for reception of the Gospel. God's ways are not worldly man's way, and it still remains true that the cross of Christ is foolishness to those who think more highly of their own wisdom than they do of God's wisdom. ✝

Hollis Miller is a gospel preacher living in Cadiz, Kentucky, USA.

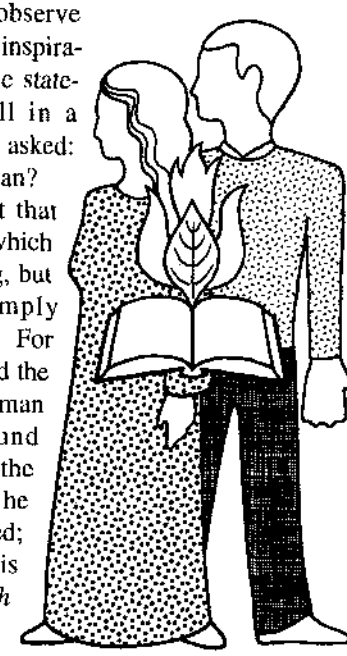
The Bible Pays Its Way

There was a home for sale in Sodom
At a most attractive price;
He who built it spent a fortune
To make it beautiful and nice.
But it soon had little value,
Little cash would have been given
When Destruction's fire and brimstone
Were poured out on it from Heaven.

How much would your house sell for
In a land devoid of truth,
Where there is no moral goodness
And where vice corrupts the youth?
If there were no open Bibles
And no church to teach the right
Why, a place in such a city
Would be blacker than the night!

Religion and the Bible
Pay their way in earthly fare,
In a town where sin runs rampant,
Who would want his house built there?
In the "commerce" of this human life
As we walk from day to day,
We give thanks for God's great wisdom
Which on earth has paid its way.

— Owen Cosgrove



Does the Holy Spirit Dwell in a Christian?

Sunny David

Reading from Romans 8:9-11 we observe that the apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, made the statement that the Holy Spirit does dwell in a Christian. The question, however, is often asked: *How* does the Holy Spirit dwell in a Christian?

First of all, we must accept the fact that there are many things in the Scriptures which we do not understand by human reasoning, but we accept them and believe them simply because they are written in God's word. For instance, the Bible teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, and that the first man was created from the dust of the ground (Genesis 1:1; 2:7). Again, Christ made the statement and it is written in the Bible that he who believes and is baptized will be saved; and that Christ adds the saved ones to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). *All such teachings of the Bible we accept by faith.* We believe these to be true because they are written in the Bible. We cannot understand them by asking how it is possible or how was it done.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit, according to the Bible, is God (Acts 5:3,4). God dwells in His children (2 Corinthians 6:16). There is absolutely nothing mystical or miraculous about it. God does not have to work miracles or do supernatural things through His children to prove that He lives in them. According to the Bible, the Godhead — God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit — live in a Christian, just as a child of God lives in Christ or in God or the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:12; Galatians 5:25). "We in Him and He in us," according to Jesus' prayer in John 17:21-23.

Notice, what the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who*

loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul was saying that after he became a Christian Christ lived in him and he lived in Christ!

What this is really defining is the relationship between God and His children. Because they have listened to His inspired word of the Holy Spirit, and have believed and obeyed His will, continuing to walk in it, thereby God's children are led by His Spirit (Romans 8:1,14; 2 Timothy 3:16). This does not mean that a Christian is led by a mysterious inner feeling. However, it does mean that the Holy Spirit leads the Christian when the Christian reads or hears God's written word from the Bible, "rightly dividing" or "handling aright" that word (2 Timothy 2:15), and walks according to His written instructions.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart and the life of a Christian, just as Christ does. *"...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..."* (Ephesians 3:16, 17). He does not dwell in a person as the demons did in the days of Christ, against one's own will, and overpowering the person's own decision-making process. But, through faith, God and Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in the faithful Christian. Led by the Holy Spirit of God, through His written word, the Christian bears *"the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* (Galatians 5:22,23).

The body of a Christian, says the Bible, is the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit of God dwells in it. *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed ***the Spirit of God dwells in you.*** *Now if anyone does not have the* ***Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*** *And if* ***Christ is in you,*** *the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if* ***the Spirit of Him*** *who raised Jesus from the dead* ***dwells in you,*** *He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through* ***His Spirit who dwells in you"*** (Romans 8:9-11).

The Christian's guarantee that he will be resurrected from the dead is the fact that *"****the Spirit of Him*** *who raised Jesus from the dead* ***dwells in*** [the Christian, so] *He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through* ***His Spirit who dwells in you."*** ✝

Sunny David is a preacher of the Gospel in New Delhi, India.

Father: *"What did you learn in Sunday School this morning?"*
Son: *"We learned about how Moses went behind enemy lines to rescue the Jews from the Egyptians. Moses ordered the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After the Israelites had crossed, he sent bombers back to blow up the bridge and the Egyptian tanks that were following them. And then..."*
Father: *"Did your teacher really tell it like that?"*
Son: *"No, but if I told you what he did say, you would never believe it!"*

It's a Miracle!

Stan Mitchell

The story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea certainly is amazing. And there are of course many stories like it in the Bible. Little "Johnny" will learn very soon of the day when the sun and the moon stood still at Joshua's command, and when an axe head floated for Elisha's benefit. There will be the matter of 5,000 people who were fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

Of course intelligent readers on the verge of the 21st Century are far too sophisticated to believe in actual miracles. With half an eye on skeptical friends and colleagues, they try to rationally explain away the miracles. Jesus was walking on a sandbank hidden from the sight of the Apostles, you see, and in the dim light of evening they jumped to the conclusion that He was walking on water. And Scriptures are not literally inspired by the Spirit of God; they are, instead, the embellished accounts of an adoring church about their teacher and master, Jesus of Nazareth.

I remember listening to a professor in graduate school on this subject once. The specific incident we were studying was the story of Elisha's axe, rising like a cork to the

surface of the water (2 Kings 6:1-6).

One bright student raised his hand, and asked, "Professor, wouldn't you say that this story is better understood as a metaphor, for whatever spiritual lesson the writer wanted to draw for his readers, rather than taking it literally, as if the axe head floated by magic?"

I'll never forget what the professor said: "Jim," (or whatever his name was), "I start with the resurrection of Jesus. If I can accept that God raised Jesus from the dead, then I may as well accept all the claims of miraculous power the Bible makes."

I don't believe in magic, or Santa Claus, or your friendly neighborhood psychic. But I do believe in an incomparable God, the creator of heaven and earth, and the Father of our savior, Jesus Christ. Not the least of His miracles is the mercy, outrageous and absolute, which He offers each of us. It was secured on a cross one afternoon almost two thousand years ago, and that is definitely a story **you wouldn't believe, unless you were told** about it by God Himself! *"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"* (John 3:16). ✝

Stan Mitchell is a preacher of the gospel in Borger, Texas, U.S.A.

Can You Remember?

You say you just can't remember the Bible?

Don't blame your thinking equipment. Researchers have calculated the brain's storage capacity at one quadrillion bits of information – that's a million times a billion!

In the words of one expert, "If we were able to force the brain to work at only one half its capacity, we would without difficulty learn over forty languages, memorize the entire encyclopedia from cover to cover, and complete the required courses of many dozens of colleges." Most of us use only ten to fifteen percent of the brain's capacity.

But you still say you can't remember God's word?

Strangely enough, many of us have no difficulty remembering the scores of last week's or last year's ball games, cooking recipes, or the cost to the penny of items.

But do we have a mental block with respect to the Bible? I wonder – could it be that we remember what we have a deep interest in? Do we remember what we love? *"O how I love thy law! It is my medication all the day"* (Psalm 119:97).

– Dalton Key

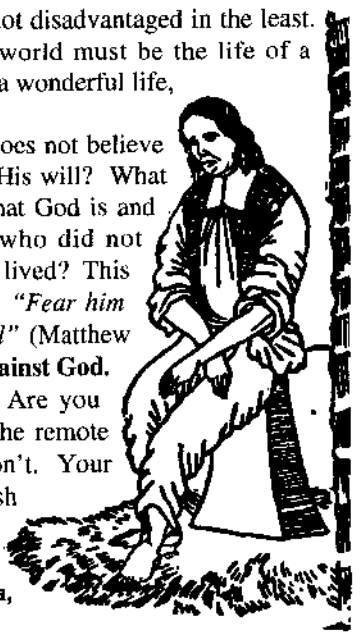
Pascal's Wager

Kerry Holton

French philosopher, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), made an argument for the existence of God which has come to be known as "Pascal's Wager." It does not prove that God exists. But, it provides incentive for one to search for God and to study and restudy the arguments that seek to prove God's existence.

Pascal's Wager asks: "Where are you going to place your bet? If you place it *with* God and there is *no God,* you lose *nothing.* If you place it *against* God and *He exists,* you lose *everything.*"

Consider this line of thinking. What does a person lose by believing in God? What does he lose by living for Christ? Not one thing. The Christian life is full of joy, meaning, and satisfaction. It provides a way to cope with adversity and live guilt-free. Many have lived the Christian life for many years, and they would all testify, "We are not disadvantaged in the least. The best and most rewarding life in the world must be the life of a believer!" So, a believer in God will enjoy a wonderful life, even if God does not exist.



But, what if God does exist, and one does not believe in him? What if a person rejects God and His will? What if he is ungodly, only to realize one day that God is and that He punishes for an eternity those who did not acknowledge His existence by the way they lived? This person would lose everything. Jesus said, *"Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28). **It just doesn't make sense to bet against God.**

So, where will you place your bet? Are you willing to risk your eternal happiness on the remote chance that God does not exist? Please don't. Your life is too precious to risk on such a foolish wager. Live for God! ⇧

Kerry Holton is the preacher for the Cornwell Drive Church of Christ in Yukon, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

So You Believe In God?

Dr. Bert Thompson

Are you a person who believes in God? Are you among the number that believes mankind is specially created in the image of God? Do you really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Savior of the world? If so, you are in good company. Many great minds down through the ages have been firm believers in God. Oftentimes we are led to believe that anyone who is anybody has long since shed their belief in God for a more "intellectual" stance of atheism or agnosticism, with accompanying belief that organic evolution has produced all we see around us through genetic mutations and natural selection. But it's just not true.

Many famous statesmen, scholars, scientists, artists, poets, and other such celebrities have held to a belief in an Almighty God. Not "everyone" believes in evolution, with its "god" of atheism, as we are led to believe. Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, former past president of the New York Academy of Sciences, affirmed that "so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance." Dr. Edwin Conklin, Princeton biologist, stated: "The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop."

The famous French General, Napoleon I (Bonaparte), observed that "All things proclaim the existence of God." British poet William Cowper commented that "In all the vast and minute, we see the unambiguous footsteps of ...God." Emerson, another famous poet, wrote that "Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere." Dr. George Washington Carver, when asked one day what he was doing,

replied, "God and I are working on the peanut." United States President Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the Earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God."

Dr. Johannes Kepler, the famous German mathematician and astronomer who formulated the three basic laws of planetary motion, described his research as "thinking God's thoughts after Him." Dr. E. W. Maness once said, "If the word 'God' were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud, engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence of God in the world would be no stronger than it is." Will Durant, the famous humanist, even once admitted, "The greatest question of our time is not communism versus individualism, not Europe versus America, not even the East versus the West; it is whether man can bear to live without God."

The psalmist stated, *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). The apostle Paul wrote: *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and glory, so that they are without excuse"* (Romans 1:20).

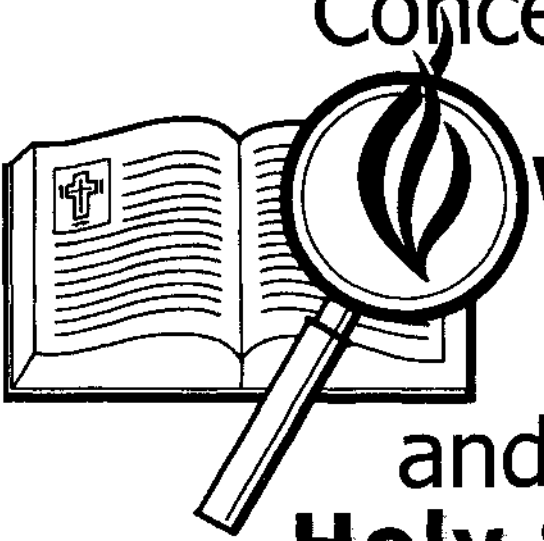
Not everyone believes in organic evolution. Many people through the ages have believed in God — for good reason.

Dr. Bert Thompson is the Executive Director of Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A.

Where Is the Missing Link?

What a misleading question! Scientists say that there are at least 11 million living species on the earth. Each of these living things grows and develops from "seed" — a fertilized living cell which contains the DNA code for its growth from the initial beginning cell to the mature form. This is true of a tree, an insect, a whale, a bird, a human — all living things! To believe that ***11 million different encyclopedias of information*** (the DNA code in one human cell alone would fill 500,000 pages if typed out, so scientists tell us!) somehow wrote themselves and then developed the enzymes necessary to read and apply their individual code to make it build the plant/animal/human it was supposed to be building makes no sense at all in a "scientific" world. — BBC

Misconceptions Concerning the Word of God and the Holy Spirit



D. R. Gnanasundaram

There are some who hold that the Holy Spirit guides and saves the sinner in a special and direct way. Certain others claim that they have been saved in some manner quite different from that outlined in the Scriptures. Such claims would make the Holy Spirit to contradict Himself and even, in a sense, make Him a liar.

The Holy Spirit Has Given the Word of God

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The Word of God Is Complete

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

The Word of God Has Been Confirmed

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"* (Hebrews 2:1-4).

The Word of God Is Referred to as the Perfect Law of Liberty

"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 deed" (James 1:25).

The Word of God Is Referred to as the Sword of the Spirit

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

The Word of God Has Been Once Delivered

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The Word Will Be the Basis of the Judgment

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

We thus see that the Holy Spirit has given us the Word which is complete, confirmed, and once delivered. Therefore no man can prophesy or

reveal any truth from God. Further the Word is also referred to as the *"Sword of the Spirit"* and *"the perfect law of liberty."* This same Word will judge us in the last day. Therefore those who claim that they are guided in a mysterious way or by a direct communication from the Holy Spirit are in error, for the simple reason that the Holy Spirit does not operate in a way which is not in harmony with the Word already given by Him.

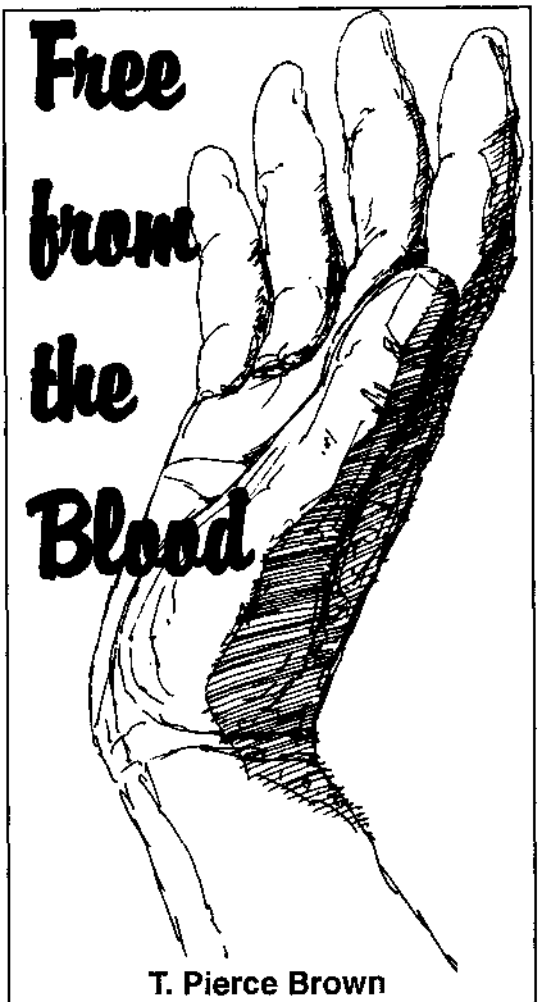
All men are saved in the same way, in accordance with the instructions given by the Holy Spirit in the inspired Word of God, and in no other way. God treats all men alike, as will be seen from the following verses: *"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is* ***no respecter of persons"*** (Acts 10:34). *"For ye are* ***all*** *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For* ***as many of you*** *as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for* ***ye are all one*** *in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26-28).

Further, God does not call one man in one way and another in still another way. He treats all people alike (Acts 10:34), and He calls all people in one way: *by the gospel, not by some "still, small voice." "Whereunto he called you* ***by our gospel,*** *to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Jesus Christ plainly said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* This is the one and only way to God, completely and fully revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

We thus see from the foregoing Scriptures that:

- all men in every nation are called by God through His Word given by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:14);
- the Word of God given by the Holy Spirit is a complete revelation from God (2 Peter 1:3);
- this Word given by the Holy Spirit will make man perfect (2 Timothy 3:16,17);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit has been confirmed (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit has been once delivered (Jude 3);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). ✞

Reggie Gnanasundaram is a preacher of the Gospel in Colombo, Sri Lanka.



In Acts 20:26,27, Paul says, as recorded in the King James Version; *"I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."* In the Bible belt I have heard it read like this, "I have not shunned to declare unto **y'all** the counsel of God." He is not saying, "I have not shunned to declare to **all of you** the counsel of God," But *"I have not shunned to declare to you **the whole counsel** of God."*

Note carefully that the reason Paul gives for being pure from the blood of all men was that he had purposed to declare the whole counsel of God. He did not look at his audience, and seeing some elders' wives who were gossips, decided that it would not be politically wise to talk about gossiping and tale bearing. He did not find some influential members who were covetous and stingy and tone down his language on the necessity of being willing to sacrifice for Christ. He did not discover that one of his best friends among the deacons was getting a divorce to marry his secretary, and decide to give a "Pauline exception" to the words of Christ in Matthew 19:9, *"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and*

shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery."

The awareness of the advisability of preaching the whole counsel of God made me determine at the start of my preaching career to preach primarily expository sermons and cover the whole New Testament in a systematic fashion. In every place where I have been located as a preacher, I have made an effort to preach topical sermons on whatever subject needed attention at that time, but at least one time each week to teach an expository lesson, starting with Matthew and going through Revelation, emphasizing whatever lessons I found in the chapter. Of course this does not guarantee that I preached the whole counsel of God, but it at least made the doing of it more probable. I know this: **I would be ashamed to be afraid, and afraid to be ashamed, to teach what God teaches on any subject, regardless of who was in the audience.**

When I was just a young man, my father who smoked was in the audience. My custom was in meetings to have a question box so the audience could ask whatever Bible questions they had, which I would try to answer during the sermon. One asked, "Do you think a person will go to hell for smoking?"

My answer then was about the same as it is now, "I hope not, although I think smoking tobacco is contrary to the will of God, and would be sinful for me. Since God does not specifically mention it, it is possible that one who did not understand its harmful nature could do it and God would forgive a sin done in ignorance that the person would not do if he understood it to be against God's will. However, I see no hope offered in the Bible for a person who says, 'I know it is bad for me, and God does not want me to do it, but I am going to do it anyway.'"

My point here is that I had no right to soften God's word just because my father was in the audience. It may be worth mentioning, however, that those of us who preach *hard and sometimes vicious sermons* should consider *how* we would teach the *same truths* if our mother, father, son or daughter were in the audience, guilty of the things we condemn. We should make sure we preach the truth ***in love*** so that **we may, in fact, be pure from the blood of all men.** ✞

T. Pierce Brown lives and preaches in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Christ paid a debt He did not owe to satisfy a debt we could not pay.

Ruth, the Woman *and* the Book

Hans J. Dederscheck

The book of Ruth takes its name from the young Moabitess, the widow of an Israelite, who made the people of Israel her people and Israel's God her God. She married and became an ancestress of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The book called "Ruth" is connected with the book of Judges. In fact, several of the Fathers of Israel combined the two into one book. The first verse of chapter one tells us *"in the days when the judges ruled..."* So we know when the story took place. Date and author are not known. Some say that Samuel was the writer; others place the book at a much later date. At the end of Ruth there is a genealogy (Ruth 4:18-22) of David. This signifies that, at least this part of the writing was written after David's house was established. It is, however, believed that the book was written at the end of the period of Judges, and the part of the genealogy was added. There was never any doubt about the canonical authority of Ruth. Ruth is mentioned in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:16.

The story of Ruth contrasts a time of violence and bloodshed with the picture of devotion, unselfish greatness, ideal family life, love and a simple trust in the Lord of heaven. This shows us that godly people are able to live a good and inspiring life even in times of trouble and depressive moments without an end.

Ruth is an outstanding young widow from Moab. Her affection for her mother-in-law is so great that she insists upon sharing her lot,

supporting her in her widowhood by showing love and companionship. She was willing to leave her native land and her own blood relatives to live in a foreign country among strangers. Her interest is focused on helping her mother-in-law, sharing her loneliness and bringing into her life the solace of her devotion and loyal support.

Boaz brings her loyalty to a highlight, saying: *"The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust"* (Ruth 2:12). And the Lord recompensed her life. In Bethlehem she found the God of Israel with deeper insight, she met Boaz as husband and gained a great inheritance.

Ruth was not a Hebrew, the nation of people out of which would come the Christ. Her origin was in Moab where the descendants of Lot lived and so we see how she came from the same Semitic stock as did Abraham.

How much can be learned from this beautiful story! Even in times of troubles and tremendous hardships human beings can stay together and serve each other in love with hope. While violence and godlessness reigned during the years of the Judges, Ruth provides a picture of sacrifice, loyalty and legitimate faith in God. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz are examples of human beauty. Indeed, their conduct stands as a forerunner of Christian principles of life and deed. Paul wrote: *"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer"* (Romans 12:12). *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). ✝

Hans J. Dederscheck is an evangelist in the country of Austria.

Cast Your Cares on Him

Whenever you are troubled
And wrought with deep despair
Gather up your burdens
And go to God in prayer.

Tell Him you are heartsick,
Sad and lonely too!
Tell Him you are burdened
And don't know what to do.

You know He stilled the tempest
And calmed the stormy sea,
Humbly ask if in His love
He'll do the same for thee!

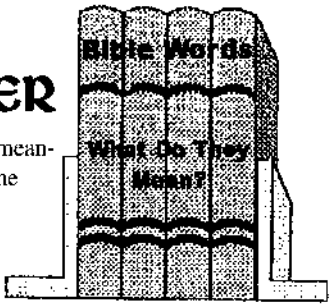
Go directly to the Lord,
On Him you can depend,
For there's absolutely nothing
His mighty hand can't mend!

The Lord is ne'er too busy
To help and comfort you,
So cast your burdens on the Lord,
And He will see you through!

— R.L. "Bob" Duncan

It Helps to Enrich Your

BIBLE WORD POWER



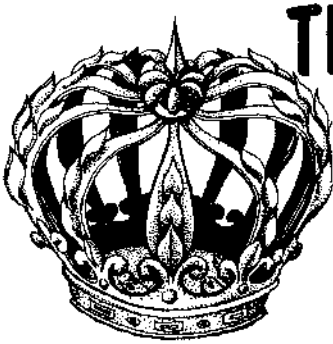
Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the context found in Romans 5 (KJV). After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. **peace** *n.* – (Gk. *i ray´ nay*) A: a fragment of B: happiness C: harmonized relationship between God and man; sense of rest and contentment D: apathy.
2. **access** *n.* – (Gk. *pros ag ogue ay´*) A: too much of a thing B: a leading or bringing into the presence of C: the entrance D: to go away.
3. **hope** *n.* – (Gk. *el pece´*) A: to anticipate with pleasure, faith, expectation B: a person's name C: peace D: the opposite of expectation.
4. **hearts** *n.* – (Gk. kar dee´ah) A: the physical heart B: a symbol of love C: rabbits D: the seat of human thoughts, feelings; the mind, the spiritual heart.
5. **without strength** *pred.adj.* – (Gk. as then ace´) A: tired B: unruly C: feeble, impotent, sick, weak, in a spiritual sense D: lacking in muscles.
6. **commendeth** *v.* – (Gk. *soon is´ tay mee*) A: to order a thing to be done B: to place together, as being worthy C: openly condemning D: to approve.
7. **reconciled** *v.* – (Gk. *kat al las´ so*) A: answered B: to be forgiven C: sure of acceptance D: to change mutually, to compound a difference.
8. **Son** *n.* – (Gk. *hwee os´*) A: child; offspring, primarily the offspring of parents B: a cousin brother C: one of the heavenly bodies D: a favored male.
9. **life** *n.* – (Gk. *dzo ay´*) A: breath B: as in "get a life" C: inherent life, as the statement is made of Deity D: to be energetic.
10. **atonement** *n.* – (Gk. *kat al lag ay´*) A: to pay penance B: restoring to divine favor; reconciliation through the blood of Christ C: to apologize D: hopeful.
11. **death** *n* – (Gk. *than´ at os*) A: punishment B: the grave C: sinfulness D: literally, the separation of the soul from the body.
12. **reigned** *v.* – (Gk. *bas il yoo´ o*) A: a storm B: to have authority over, as a king would rule C: an elected sovereign D: the gaining of power.
13. **figure** *n* – (Gk. *too´ pos*) A: a number B: the physique C: style or resemblance, likeness as one person or thing is representative of another D: style.
14. **judgment** *n.* – (Gk. kree´ *mah*) A: the function for or against crime; the pronouncement of condemnation B: aquittal C: opinion D: defence by law.
15. **condemnation** *n.* – (Gk. *kat ak ree´ no*) A: approval B: a reference C: unmerciful in attitude D: to make judgment against; that is, to sentence.
16. **justification** *n.* – (Gk. *dik ah´ yo sis*) A: justice B: condemnation C: acquittal of guilt so that condemnation is negated D: innocent.
17. **righteousness** *n.* – (Gk. *did ah yos oo´*) A: guiltless B: the effect of justification C: to be right in one's own eyes D: expectation of salvation.

1. **peace** *n.* – (Gk. *i ray´ nay*) C: harmonized relationship between God and man; sense of rest and contentment.
2. **access** *n.* – (Gk. *pros ag ogue ay´*) B: a leading or bringing into the presence of, as by faith we have access to God.
3. **hope** *n.* – (Gk. *el pece´*) A: to anticipate with pleasure, faith, expectation; as Christians we have hope in Christ, because He died in our stead.
4. **hearts** *n.* – (Gk. kar dee´ ah) D: the seat of human thoughts, feelings; the mind, the spiritual heart; within the human heart is the capacity to love, one of the ways in which humans are made in the likeness of God.
5. **without strength** *pred.adj.* – (Gk. as then ace´) C: feeble, impotent, sick, weak; the spiritual weakness which results from sin in our lives.
6. **commendeth** *v.* – (Gk. *soon is´ tay mee*) B: to place together, as being worthy; because we have been washed by the blood of Christ, we have been made worthy recipients of the love of God.
7. **reconciled** *v.* – (Gk. *kat al las´ so*) D: to change mutually, to compound a difference; reconciliation requires "mutual" change, that is, man must change to conform to God's will, and in response, God changes our status from "lost" to "saved".
8. **Son** *n.* – (Gk. *hwee os´*) A: child; used widely to denote offspring; primarily the offspring of parents.
9. **life** *n.* – (Gk. *dzo ay´*) C: inherent life, as the statement is made of Deity, that life resides in God; "in Him was life...".
10. **atonement** *n.* – (Gk. *kat al lag ay´*) B: restoring to divine favor; reconciliation made possible through the blood of Christ.
11. **death** *n* – (Gk. *than´ at os*) D: literally, the separation of the soul from the body; cessation of the breath of life in the body.
12. **reigned** *v.* – (Gk. *bas il yoo´ o*) B: to have authority over, as a king reigns.
13. **figure** *n* – (Gk. *too´ pos*) – C: style or resemblance, the likeness as one person or thing is representative of another.
14. **judgment** *n.* – (Gk. kree´ *mah*) A: the function for or against crime; the pronouncement of condemnation.
15. **condemnation** *n.* – (Gk. *kat ak ree´ no*) D: to make judgment against; that is, to sentence.
16. **justification** *n.* – (Gk. *dik ah´ yo sis*) C: acquittal of guilt, for Christ's sake, so that the judgment and condemnation are negated.
17. **righteousness** *n.* – (Gk. *did ah yos oo´*) B: the effect of justification; restoration of man's original state of innocence before God, because of the cleansing by the blood of Christ.

Vocabulary Scale

7-10 correct .....Good
11-13 correct.....Bible Student
14-17 correct.....Bible Scholar



The Main Issue in the Church Is AUTHORITY

Maxie B. Boren

It seems to me there is one *vitally important* matter that has become obscured in the midst of brotherhood differences and controversies: **Have we perhaps lost sight of whose church it is?**

Surely we would all agree that the Bible is the revealed will of Almighty God to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and that in the Bible God plainly tells us to heed His Son (Matthew 17:5), to whom He has given **all authority** (Matthew 28:18)!

During His personal ministry, Jesus said, "*Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18). The rock upon which Christ said He would build His church was the truth of His divinity — that indeed He was (yes, is!) the Son of God (see verse 16)! Jesus affirmed that not even death would be able to prevail against His church! In fact, Jesus prevailed over death, and by His resurrection undeniable proof of His deity was clearly declared (Romans 1:4). Ascending back to the Father, He was given all power and dominion, and God *"put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:21-23; see also 1 Peter 3:22). This was in direct fulfillment of the vision Daniel saw, recorded in Daniel 7:13-14:

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

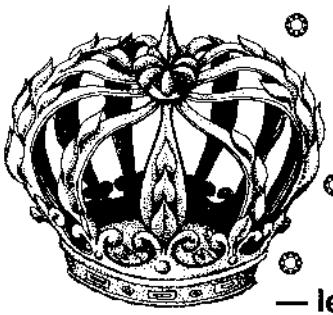
Then to Him was given ***dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.*** *His dominion is*

an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed."

He did establish on earth the church of which He spoke, having its beginning in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost day (i.e., a Jewish feast day — Leviticus 23:15-16, also called "feast of weeks," or "feast of harvest" — Exodus 34:22) following His resurrection (Acts 2). This "setting up of the kingdom" took place even as the prophets of old had foretold it would (see such passages as Isaiah 2:1-2 and Daniel 2:44, etc.).

Christ is the head of His church, and He is to have all the preeminence in it (Colossians 1:18). Thus, whatever we do, in word or in deed, it is to be done by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Therefore, whatever the subject might we argue over, we had all better keep in mind **whose church it is**! On the matter of **worship**, let us listen to Christ and His inspired apostles (John 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 14:40). On the matter of **doctrine**, let us listen to Christ (John 8:31-32; Mark 7:6-9; 2 John 9-11). On the matter of the **undenominational nature of the church**, read the book of Ephesians — there is but **one true church**! And that **one church** belongs to Christ! Let us not forget this truth ! ✝



On the matter of salvation — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of doctrine — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of fellowship — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of authority — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of worship — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of the church — let us hear Christ!

On the matter of eternity — let us hear Christ!

Maxie B. Boren preaches for the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, U.S.A.

SPIRITUAL SECURITY

of the Faithful Christian

(Romans 8:l,14; 1 John 5:12,13)

Don L. Norwood

In the gospel of John, chapter 17, Jesus prayed for His disciples. First He prayed for the Apostles and then He included **all** who would believe on Him through **their word**, through the teaching they would do by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (See John 14:26 and John 16:13). Jesus said in verses 1 through 3 of John 17 that to have eternal life *one must know the Father and Jesus Christ whom the Father did send.* Then John wrote in 1 John 2:3 that one can *know God* only by *obeying His commandments.*

When an alien sinner comes to believe the gospel and truly repents, confesses Christ as Lord and is baptized in the name of Christ (meaning by His authority) then that person is saved (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:35-39; Gal 3:26-29). In Christ and walking by the Spirit (which means to continue to learn and then do what the Bible, the Lord's *word,* teaches) that person is *above condemnation.* We read in Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

John wanted Christians to know and understand how they could always *maintain* fellowship with God and stay in a saved condition (1 John 1:1-10;2:l-5). In this context he pointed out that if the Christian would, *"...walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us*

from all sin." Remember Jesus had said, *"I am the light of the world and he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life"* (John 8:12). To walk in the light as He is in the light simply means to *learn* and *do* what His word teaches us. If one will honestly do this to the best of his ability all the time he can be safe and indeed have eternal life.

Now as long as one lives in the flesh he will sin from time to time (Romans 7:14-25; 8:1) and when he does and realizes it, if he will repent, confess his sin and pray for God's forgiveness, God will forgive and Jesus' blood will wash him to pureness again. This is what he said in 1 John 1:7-9; Romans 7:24,25; 8:1. Also see James 5:16 and Acts 8:22.

If a Christian willfully sins and abandons his faith in the Lord, he will not be forgiven unless he truly repents and returns with the attitude and action expressed in Jesus' story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. To willfully sin and not repent cuts one off from the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:26). One can practice disobedience to God until he hardens himself and will never repent (Hebrews 6:1-6; Hebrews 3:12-14; 2 Peter 2:20ff).

All Christians need to remember that God does not want any of us to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). This verse says that He is *"longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance..."* This means that God will give us ample time to see our error and repent, if only we will repent. But He also warns that Jesus will come like a thief in the night when none are expecting him (Matthew 24:42ff). Should this happen, or if death came to one suddenly, with the person knowing that he has not repented and has neglected his soul, he will be lost (Matthew 24:42ff; Hebrews 2:1-4). He will be lost, *not because God did not give him ample time to repent*, but because the Christian himself neglected his own salvation.

Remember also that one's conscience will always approve of what one *thinks* is right. This is why a person must be directed by **the word of the Lord** in order to be right. So a Christian should do as Paul said he did, *"In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men"* (Acts 24:16).

The prevailing attitude of our hearts should be as King David's was: *"...because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life..."* (1 Kings 15:5 and 1 Kings 14:8 also Acts 13:22). ✞

Don L. Norwood is a missionary to South India.

Christmas Is Pagan

Keith Sisman

(A short history of Christmas)

In origin, "Christmas" is pagan. It is not found in the Bible, neither did the early pre-Catholic church celebrate it. The name itself is from the Old English "Mass of Christ" — Christmas.

Pagan festivities, merrymaking, the giving of presents coupled with the worship of idols and pagan gods, with human sacrifice, are lost in the myths of time. New Year was the time when pagans celebrated the return of the Sun and worshipped it. It is these two festivals that continue today in the form of "Christmas".

The early church father, Tertullian (died 220?) wrote a treatise "De Idololatria" in which he chastised Christians for putting wreaths on their doors and following other practices of idolatry at the Winter Solstice and the New Year. At that time many Christians who did not decorate their homes with lamps and decorations were searched out and persecuted.

"But *'let your works shine,'* saith He; but now all our shops and gates shine! You will now-a-days find more doors of heathens without lamps and laurel-wreaths than of Christians. ... By us...the Saturnalia and New-year's and Midwinter's festivals and Matronalia are frequented — presents come and go — New-year's gifts — games join their noise — banquets join their din! Oh better fidelity of the nations to their own sect, which claims no solemnity of the Christians for itself! Not the Lord's day, not Pentecost, if they had known them, would they have shared with us; for they would fear lest they should seem to be Christians. *We* are not apprehensive lest we seem

to be *heathens!"* (from "On Idolatry", page 70, by Tertullian, **The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3,** Eerdmans Printing Company).

Laurels were placed on doors *to honor various door, home, and hinge* ***gods***. It is clear that the custom of giving presents and having celebrations was well established by this time (c200), from Tertullian's writing on idolatry. The customs of giving presents at New Year can be traced back to Babel, prior to the dispersion of mankind, and was widespread when Tertullian wrote.

The Romans celebrated the great holiday Saturnalia from 17 to 21 December in remembrance of the great golden age. During this time slaves were given limited freedom and were served by their masters. On the 22 came Sigillaria, the feast of dolls when dolls and other toys were given to children. On 25 December came Brumalia, otherwise known as "Dies Natalis Invicti Solis", "The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun". This was to celebrate the time of year when the days began to lengthen after the solstice. This date was quite recent, being instituted by the Emperor Aurelian in honor of Mithras, the Persian Sun God of which he was a worshiper around 270-273 AD.

The last date of the Roman holiday was Kalendae Januarri, New Year's Day when everybody gave gifts to everyone else.

In Britain the New Year was celebrated in the feast of Yule and in Norway the festival of the god Thor.

When Christianity had been legalized, and the Roman (increasingly apostate) church had gained control of the majority of believers, it incorporated these feasts into the one feast "Christmas", much as the Jews had done when they occupied the Promised Land but failed to expulse all of the idolatrous people already there! So from around 336 the church at Rome set the date of Christ's birth at 25 December, but this was not followed by other churches, the date finally gaining wide acceptance only in the fifth century. The Armenian church still celebrates Christmas on 6 January.

When Christianity had been legalized, and the Roman (increasingly apostate) church had gained control of the majority of believers, it incorporated these feasts into the one feast "Christmas", much as the Jews had done when they occupied the Promised Land but failed to expulse all of the idolatrous people already there!

Many dates were ascribed for Christ's birth by the early church: 6 January, March 24 and 28, April 2, 19, May 20, as well as December 25.

Pope Gregory 1 wrote a letter to Augustine of Canterbury (c600) to encourage the pagan use of decorating buildings with evergreens. Augustine had been concerned with paganism and, again, the answer was to incorporate those practices into Catholicism, to make it easier for "converts" to change from one religion to the other.

Ivy was the badge of the wine god Bacchus and was banished to the outside of the house. Holly was allowed inside and hence we have the competition between "the Holly and the Ivy".

Mistletoe is of Celtic origin and was known as "all-heal". It was believed to have certain miraculous powers. Mistletoe is found on the oak tree which was highly venerated by the Oak Priests (Druids) of the many Celtic tribes across Europe and England. Because of its association with the Druids many denominations have in times past refused its use in decorations in church buildings.

Christmas hymns started in the eastern church from around 760. Carols which are festive songs, as opposed to devotional hymns, started around 1100 but were not in regular use until the 1300s onwards.

In the 1640s in England, Christmas was dismissed as being pagan and outlawed. During the early nineteenth century it was revived, particularly by Albert, the husband of queen Victoria, who reintroduced the fir-tree into the celebrations.

It can also be concluded that these were not the only New Year's festivities but that astrology, divination and human sacrifice would have been made at this time of year.

We can conclude safely that the New Year celebrations and giving of presents predate Christianity and are Pagan in origin. It can also be concluded that these were not the only New Year's festivities but that astrology, divination and human sacrifice would have been made at this time of year. ✝

SOURCES: *Tertullian 'On Idolatry' Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3. 1885/ 1994 reprint. 'Christmas and Christmas Lore' TG Crippen 1923. Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, Everett Ferguson, Editor, 1990. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 1995 revised second edition.*

Keith Sisman is a Christian living in Huntingdon, Cambs., England

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

"Wrath of God" is righteous judgment against sin. Not vindictively, but by nature, as light displaces darkness, truth judges error. See Galatians 6:7,8.

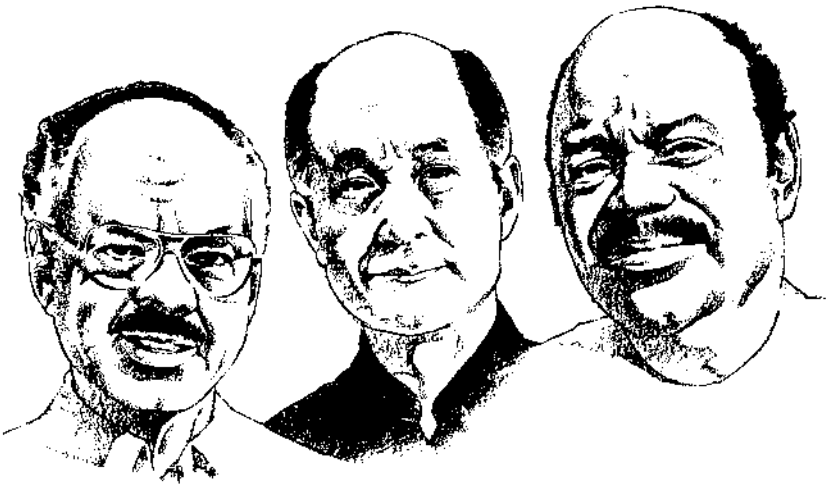
Revealed by God in Eden (Genesis 2:16ff), at the flood (Genesis 6:12ff), against Sodom (Genesis 18), Israel (Deuteronomy 11:26ff), and in the New Testament (Matthew 10:28).

"Ungodliness" — all deeds contrary to the **image of God** in which man was created, hence, any rebellion on the part of man.

All *"unrighteousness"* is spiritual wickedness, unbelief in one's heart, the seat where all ungodliness is conceived, planned, and put into action. See Genesis 15:4 and Habakkuk 2:4.

Man knows right from wrong. Even the courts judge him on this basis. But this person imprisons truth in a dungeon deep in his heart to prevent it from interfering with his rebellious life style.

Fenter Northern



"Do You Want To Live To Be: 85? 95? Older?"

Tom Holland

In bold green type on the front of a large envelope this question recently came to me. My mental response was what yours probably would be: "That all depends: If my mind is still alert. If I can take care of myself so I'm not a burden to others."

Further reflection led me to respond with a "no!" No, I do not want to live to be 85, 95, or older. I want to live forever, don't you? Please note that I didn't say that I wanted to live on earth forever. But I do want to live forever.

The Lord Jesus Christ has assured us that if we get into Him and abide in Him we shall indeed live forever! When our Lord was at the tomb of Lazarus, the Savior declared, *"I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and*

believeth in me ***shall never die.*** *Believest thou this?"* (John 11:25,26).

Please observe that it is "in me," in Christ, that we are assured that we shall never die. It is in Christ that we live. Did He not come to give us an abundant life (John 10:10)? Are we not promised life if we truly accept God's testimony about His Son, with all that is implied in the acceptance of that testimony (John 20:30,31)? Having received life in Christ, new life (2 Corinthians 5:17), then we live. Physical death does not destroy our real life in Christ. Physical death is for a faithful child of God a "departure," not a destruction (Philippians 1:23; 2 Timothy 4:6). Physical death for God's child is not termination, it is transition (Philippians 1:23).

Death means separation. Physical death is a separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). But the Christian who lives in Christ will never be separated from His Lord. In physical death he/she goes to *"be with Christ."* In eternity we shall be with Him.

If you want to live forever, don't look to Vitamin E, or regular exercise, but obey the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 5:8,9), and live in Him — forever!! ✝

Tom Holland is a writer and preacher living in Brentwood, Tennessee, U.S.A.

I'm Going Home

In that bright home beyond our view,
Far from earth's sorrow and strife,
God waits to give His chosen few
Sweet, everlasting life.

Soon He will call my weary soul,
Ever His glory to share,
On wings Divine I'll reach that goal,
Making my hope up there.

When all my work on earth is done
Angels will bear me away,
Ever to wear that crown I've won,
Heaven my home for aye.

I will arise happy and free
After the ages have passed,
When Heaven's gates swing wide for me
I'm going home at last.

— Harry Presley

The Eternal Loophole

Ancil Jenkins

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty'" (John 6:35).

A newspaper advertisement for an evangelistic crusade in a major city recently used this theme: **You are born, you suffer, you die.**

Fortunately there is a loophole.

This theme captures so much of the frustration of so many. No amount of enjoyment, escape, and dissipation can quieten the ever-present thought, "You are going to die." The loophole is man's hope and is simple, even as easy as knowing the difference between "one" and "two." The Bible teaches:

There are TWO births.

Jesus tells us there are two ways of being born. One is physical. Flesh gives birth to flesh, John 3:6. The natural birth has come to all; we cannot deny or escape it.

Yet, Jesus told Nicodemus of another birth, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* . . . *"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit"* (John 3:3,5). We are born once without choice. We are born the second time of our own accord, when we *choose* obedience to God and birth by baptism into His Family.

There are TWO resurrections.

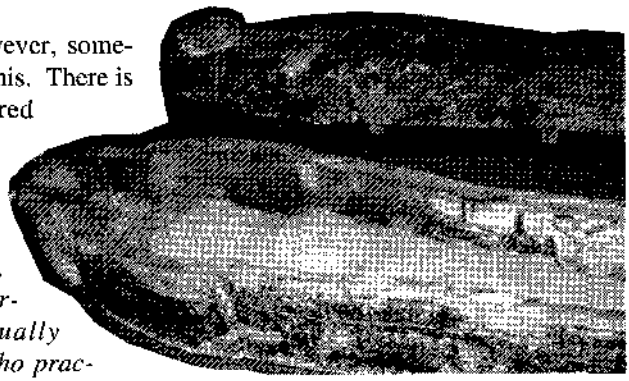
Jesus also clearly taught of a coming resurrection of all men from the dead. *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice"* (John 5:28). Just as all die (Hebrews 9:27), so all will be raised. This event also is without our choice.

Jesus taught of another resurrection. *"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live"* (John 5:25). This is not a resurrection of dead physical bodies, but of spiritually dead souls in bodies that are yet among the living! Those **dead in sin** can choose to hear the voice of Jesus and live

in Him. **This living involves a resurrection from the grave of baptism** (Romans 6:3-4). This resurrection is one which each individual chooses for himself, so that he may be spiritually alive to God while still in this mortal body.

There are TWO deaths to die.

All will die physically. This is inevitable. Though man can lengthen life, he cannot escape dying. How sad when a soul leaves a body. The body is prepared, put in a casket, and buried in the ground where it returns to the dust of the earth, as God forewarned Adam.



There is, however, something worse than this. There is a death to be feared far more than the death of this physical body. *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"* (Revelation 21:8). The eternal, conscious suffering of the souls of the wicked is called the second death, of which there will be no end, and from which there will be no rescue.

What is the loophole?

The loophole is to go beyond what naturally happens. We are born without choice, we die without choice, and we will be raised without choice. However, if we choose to be born again spiritually through baptism, and raised again to a new spiritual life, we will die only physically, while living eternally with God in that new heaven and earth.

Someone said, **"He who is born once will die twice. He that is born twice will die only once."**

Don't miss this loophole. ✝

Ancil Jenkins preaches for the Sunset congregation in Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

The Impossible Made Possible

David R. Pharr

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

Most of our preaching has the expectation that people can and should change their lives. Jeremiah seems to say that it is impossible for some ever to change. The prophet has prayed, preached, and wept, seeking to bring them to repentance. They were so accustomed to doing evil, so set in the ways of sin, that it seemed impossible for them to change.

The Bible shows the hardening effects of repeated sin. The conscience can become *"seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2) and some are *"past feeling"* (Ephesians 4:19). Someone has said that many lives are like concrete: "thoroughly mixed up and permanently set." Love of sin can have a mighty hold.

Regarding the possibility of any real change of character, the world is generally quite skeptical. "He will never change, and if he does, it will not last."

Our own experiences often confirm how hard it is to change the leopard's spots. How hard it is, for example, to change a habit! Habits erode deep grooves in the mind and in the character. "We first make a habit and then the habit makes us." Past failures haunt us and make us think that failures will always follow. "I have tried, but it's just no use." "I am what I am and that is all I will ever be."

Some foolish psychology has tried to solve the dilemma by telling people to just accept themselves as they are. It is evident, though, that where sin is involved, it is not acceptable to stay as we are. Transgressors need forgiveness. Guilty consciences need assurances.

Lost souls need redemption.

The wonderful fact is that some people do make dramatic changes. Bad habits can be broken; personalities can be reshaped; character can be changed. The ultimate issue, however, is forgiveness. You may reform your life, but you can no more forgive your own sins than the leopard can change his own spots.

It is God who can make the impossible possible. One place this is wonderfully taught is in Mark 10:23-27. After Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved, the disciples asked incredulously, *"Who then can be saved?"* But Jesus declared, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."* Men cannot save themselves, by themselves, but God makes it possible.

I wish there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never be put on again.

—Louisa Fletcher

There is such a place — a spiritual place — where lives can begin again, where the slate is wiped clean, where the past is forgiven, and where the rest of life can be different. That place is in Christ. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a penitent believer is baptized into Christ, his sins are forgiven (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38) and he becomes a *"new man"* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The gospel shows the man who is a failure that he does not have to remain a failure, the criminal that he does not have to remain a criminal, the sinner that he is not hopelessly trapped in sin. God can change the leopard's spots, if we will surrender our lives to Him.

There is a corny old joke that goes like this: "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" "Just one, but the light bulb has got to want to change!" That is where the issue must be left. The Lord can do His part. Your life can be changed. But not unless *you want* to change. ✞

David R. Pharr is the preacher for the Lord's church in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

A child of God should bear a marked resemblance to his Father.

But I *Did* Obey

Jack W. Carter

These were the words of King Saul when he returned from his mission to destroy the Amalakites and Samuel asked him why he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord.

Saul was telling the truth up to a point. But the real point was that he had not obeyed the voice of God in everything.

In this particular instance, Saul and his men had kept some of the animals and the "choice things" as spoil. This violated the specific instructions from God that clearly outlined how Saul and his army were to completely destroy every living creature of the Amalakites.

How is it that Saul came to reason in such a way? He seemed to conclude that obeying *the major thrust* of God's direction was the only really important requirement. Disobeying God in one or two trivial matters seemed to be nothing really important.

Saul lost his kingdom because he entertained such reasoning. I am convinced that in the day of judgment, many people will stand beside Saul to lose much more than a kingdom and for the same reason.

Partial obedience is really no obedience at all. For whatever reason — whether we feel that the little things get in the way of what we want for ourselves, or we didobey in ignorance — we will eventually learn that God will no more accept disobedience from us than He did from King Saul. The problem is, we may learn it too late. ✝

Jack W. Carter is the former editor of *The Rocky Mountain Christian* and is the preacher for the Castle Rock Church of Christ in Castle Rock, Colorado, USA.

Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the book of Acts, chapter one, NKJV.

1. To whom was this account directed? (V. 1)
2. What is proposed to be covered in this account? (V. 1,2)
3. Jesus presented Himself alive to His apostles, by _____ _____ _____, being seen by them during _____ _____, and speaking of the things _____ _____ _____ _____ _____. (V. 3)
4. Before Jesus' ascension to heaven, He told the apostles to wait in _____ for the _____ _____ _____ _____. (V.4)
5. How was the Gospel supposed to spread? (V. 8)
6. When Jesus ascended, what did the "men in white" say to the apostles? (V. 9-11)
7. Who was staying in the upper room? (V. 13,14)
8. What had happened to Judas? (V. 18)
9. Judas' betrayal price was used to purchase a plot of ground, called _____ _____ _____, for the burial of strangers (Matthew 27:6-8), fulfilling a prophecy in Psalm 69:25. (V. 18-20)
10. Peter was speaking to the disciples (about 120 people) concerning replacing _____, according to Acts 1:20 and Psalm 109:8.
11. What were the requirements for an apostle? (V. 21,22)
12. Who were the two men suggested? (V. 23)
13. What did they pray? (V. 24)
14. What was the newly chosen person supposed to do? (V. 25)
15. After praying that God would guide the choice of men, how did the disciples "vote"? (V. 14)
16. Who was chosen? (V. 26)
17. What had Jesus promised would happen to the apostles? (V. 5)
18. Through Whom had Jesus given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen? (V. 2)

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

What Is the Church of Christ?

Bill Dillon

The church of the Bible cannot be any part of a denomination. It is neither Catholic nor Protestant. It is the spiritual body of our Lord, Jesus Christ Wherever Christ is preached and men believe in Him, repent, and are baptized into Christ, Christians are made (Acts 2:36-40). Wherever and whenever believers are obedient to the Gospel of Christ, they become members of the church of Christ.

Individuals then work with a local group of fellow Christians, and together they form a congregation of God's people. They are purely and simply Christians — **nothing more, less, or else!**

It is our task today to reproduce the New Testament order of things. We appeal for a restoration of the early church and the unity of all Christians.

The church of the Lord is the saved (Acts 2:47). The church (the body of Christ) is the **appointed place** for all **the saved.** In the days of the patriarch Noah, God put salvation in the ark (Genesis 6-9). When the floodwaters came, all

human life not on the ark of safety was lost (1 Peter 3:20,21). Eight precious souls were delivered while the rest of the ungodly and disobedient multitudes were destroyed. In the time of the Great Deluge salvation was in the ark. And more, there was **only one ark**.

In the days of the lawgiver Moses, God placed salvation under the blood of the Passover Lamb. The Lord told the Israelites to put the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. The Lord's assurance was, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you"* (Exodus 12:13). During the long night that followed in Egypt, the death of the first-born of each house took place where the blood was not found. God **was clear in His meaning and true to His Word** in putting salvation or deliverance under the blood of the Lamb.

In the New Testament age of Bible time God has, as He has in the past, specified salvation in a certain place. Today, salvation is in the church, as stated in Acts 2:47, *"The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*

Truly, *"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). ✝

Bill Dillon is editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the Lord's church in Mountain Home, Arkansas, U.S.A.

A Growing Church

I really want the church to
grow —
It means the world to me;
I always worship with the saints
when I've no company.

I really want the church to
grow —
and prosper to the end;
Then maybe someone else
could come
and try to reach my friend.

I really want the church to
grow —
and have sufficient funds;
I'd give some too, except that I
must pay off all these
"duns!"

I'm anxious for the church to
grow,
the worship is so great;
When I last went, six months
ago,
I was just barely late.

I wonder why the church won't
grow?
It would, you plainly see,
If all the members of the flock
were faithful, just like me.

— Norman Gipson

The Kingdom: The Message of Separation

Betty Burton Choate

When John the Baptist came preaching, what was his message? When Christ began to preach, what was His central theme? When His disciples were sent out, what were they told to preach? When the disciples went into all the world preaching the gospel, what was their message? Acts 8:5,12 defines for us:

"...Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached ***Christ*** *to them.... When they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the* ***kingdom of God*** *and the* ***name of Jesus Christ****, both men and women were baptized."*

Again, what had Jesus preached? *"Repent, for the* ***kingdom of heaven*** *is at hand"* (Matthew 4:17). In the gospel accounts, how many times was the kingdom — **the coming of the church** — the core of the message? Jesus said, *"...theirs is the* ***kingdom of heaven****"* (Matthew 5:3,10); *"...you will by no means enter* ***the kingdom of heaven****"* (V. 20). *He commanded, "But seek first* ***the kingdom****..."* (6:33). *"Not everyone...shall enter* ***the kingdom of heaven****"* (7:21). *"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching* ***the gospel of the kingdom****"* (Matthew 9:35; also 4:23).

The gospel accounts show that Jesus *proved* **Himself** to be the Messiah by the works He did through the power of the Holy Spirit, but His *message of words* was not so much on the subject of **Himself** as on **the kingdom**! He was preparing His listeners for the day when He would begin to draw men out of the kingdom of darkness and to translate them into His own kingdom of light, into His church.

No one can truly understand Christ without understanding His message of separation, of leaving the world and coming into His kingdom. He warned that those who follow Him *must count the cost* (Luke 14:28-33). They must enter the narrow way by the strait gate: *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there*

are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13,14).

Those who would follow Christ must separate themselves from the world: *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?...Therefore, 'Come out from among them and* ***be separate****, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you'"* 2 Corinthians 6:14,17). They are drawn together in His body, which is **His church, His kingdom.**

The Kingdom of Darkness, the Kingdom of Light

Again, we see the two bodies of people in the world: the righteous, and the unrighteous; those in the kingdom of Christ, and those in Satan's kingdom which is the kingdom of darkness. We have come full circle, back to the realization that there are only two divisions of people in God's record. Certainly, *the one seeking salvation must have a knowledge of these things in order to count the cost and to choose salvation in Christ.*

Sometimes in the eagerness of Christians to share the gospel with sinners, great hurry is made to bring them to the point of baptism. Sometimes such people have not been taught enough of God's requirements to be able, actually, to count the cost involved in discipleship.

Such hurry, such deliberate "passing over" of possibly difficult requirements in order not to discourage the sinner and perhaps turn him back to the world, is an attitude contrary to the Scriptures. *God is not a beggar,* eager and anxious to take just anything or any heart casually offered to Him. If we pay attention to His dealings with people, as recorded in the Scripture, we will see that *though God loves all people and would have all to be saved,* ***He does not compromise what He expects and requires*** *just so that someone else can be grabbed (maybe unknowingly and therefore actually unwillingly) out of the world and thrust into His church!*

Think again about the parables concerning **the kingdom** in Matthew 13. From verse 10, what reason did Jesus give the disciples for teaching in parables? *So that those who had no genuine love for the truth would not find it!*

What do we learn in Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler? Obviously, this was a good man, a keeper of what he believed to be the will of God. Jesus didn't look at all that was right in his life and say, "O.K. You're close enough to the truth. I'll overlook the remainder." No, He said, "**One thing** you lack,"

and when that young man turned away rather than correct that one thing, **Jesus let him go — even though He loved him!**

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 we read that there are those who, basically, do not really **love the truth.** Does God try to nurse them along, hoping that they will eventually be willing to turn fully to Him? No. The Holy Spirit recorded that God Himself sends them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie and be damned. Why? **Because they did not believe the truth.**

Therefore, it is vital for people to realize **(1)** that the message of the kingdom or church was what Christ and the apostles came preaching, **(2)** that there is a wall of separation between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, which is the church of our Lord, and **(3)** that God Himself has laid down strict requirements which must be met before He translates anyone out of the kingdom of darkness and puts him into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:18).

Outside or Inside?

So, after one learns of **God** and of **Christ** and of **the church,** what more must be understood in order to be saved? Must he have a thorough knowledge of all of God's directives about the Christian life? No, not really. He still is **outside** the kingdom, so the part of the message that is critical for him are the directions on how to *enter that strait gate.*

Faith

Hebrews 11:6 states clearly, *"But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

The knowledge of God must bring **faith** in two aspects: **(1)** belief that God exists; **(2)** belief in the **reward** He has promised (God's grace reaching out to man) to those who *diligently* seek Him (man's response to God's reaching out)

Knowledge or understanding of Christ's work in our salvation, as recorded in the Gospel accounts, is summarized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4: *"...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."***

Repentance

Jesus said, *"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). The one desiring to leave the world and enter through the strait gate must choose to turn *away* from sin and to turn *to* God. He cannot genuinely make that *choice* without understanding what is involved in coming into the kingdom.

Confession

In Matthew 10:32 Jesus also explained, *"...whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.."* The penitent believer must not be ashamed to confess the crucified Galilean as his Lord.

Baptism, the New Birth

Nicodemus came to Jesus, seeking understanding. *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born** of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom of God"*** (John 3:5).

How simple the plan! How few are the requirements of knowledge and obedience in order to be saved!

Knowledge:

1. Knowledge of God.
2. Knowledge of Christ
3. Knowledge of baptismal birth through the Spirit into the kingdom: the church, the body of Christ, the family of God, which is separated from the world.

Response:

Faith

Repentance

Confession of Christ

Baptism [the new birth of water and the Spirit] into Christ and His kingdom.

If today's seeker had been in the crowd on the day of the beginning of the church (Acts 2), he would have heard the powerful and convicting lesson that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the resurrected Savior.

With those 3,000 others who were *"cut to the heart"*, he would have asked, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37).

He would have heard Peter say, ***'Repent** and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (V. 38).

And he would have been among those *"...who gladly received his word* [and] *were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them"* (V. 41).

*"...and the Lord added to **the church** daily those who were being saved"* (V. 47).

Thus, the preaching of the kingdom, the call to humanity to come out of the world and be separated as a holy people unto God, is completed in the fruit it bears: **the birth of individual souls into the kingdom.** This separation unto God was Christ's purpose in coming into the world. We must know and understand His call in order to respond to it, after having counted the cost. ✝

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate, editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

Three Names One Group of Men

Royce Frederick

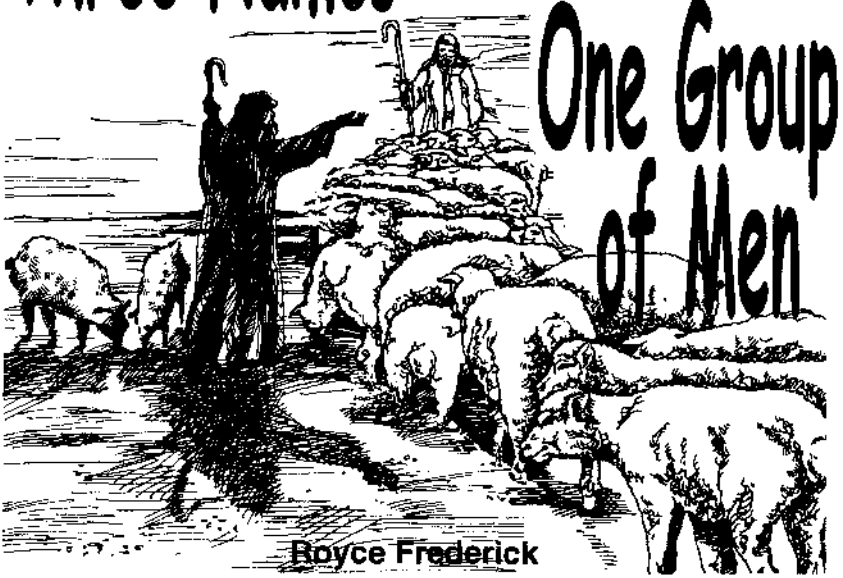
Several different terms may be used to refer to one person. For example, one man may be referred to as "husband," "father," "son," "uncle," "brother," and "employee." All of these terms refer to the same person, but each term describes him from a different viewpoint.

In the New Testament, we find the three terms "elders," "bishops," and "pastors." All of these terms refer to the same group of men in the local church, but each term describes them from a different viewpoint.

They were called **"elders"** (Greek: *presbuteros*, sometimes translated "presbyters") because they were selected from among the older men of the congregation. This refers to their age relationship to other members. It suggests experience and maturity.

They were called **"bishops"** (Greek: *episkopos*), which simply means "overseers." This indicates their work relationship. They were responsible for overseeing the work and worship of the local church.

They were called **"pastors"** (Greek: *poimen*), which simply means "shep-



herds." This refers to their care relationship to the other members. They were responsible for gently feeding and tending to the souls in the local church, just as shepherds care for sheep.

Several verses in the New Testament show that "elders," "bishops," and "pastors" all refer to the same group of men in the local church:

> *"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: '...Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"* (Acts 20:17-18, 28).

> *"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:1-3). See Titus 1:5,7.

The New Testament calls these men "elders" most often. The term "pastors" is used only once (Ephesians 4:11). These men were selected according to specific qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They were appointed to their work by apostles and preachers (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

In the first century, each congregation was governed by two or more elders, men who were members of that local congregation. Deacons helped them as special servants of the church (see Acts 6:1-6; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

But men often love power (see 3 John 9; Matthew 20:20-28). Some churches began to be ruled by one man. By the second century, many churches were departing from the Lord's way of governing. Local churches surrendered their independence and began to be ruled in groups, with each group under one man. Eventually, men were able to exercise control over churches in large regions, and even among a plurality of nations.

If we desire to please the Lord, we must go back to the Bible. We must restore the pattern of the New Testament church by following all of His teachings, including the way the local church is governed. ✞

Royce Frederick is the editor of *International Gospel Teacher*, is very involved in evangelism in India, and lives in Lufkin, Texas, U.S.A.

How do you measure up?

But the fruit of the Spirit is

love,

joy,

peace,

longsuffering,

kindness,

goodness,

faithfulness,

gentleness,

self-control.

Against such there is no law

(Galatians 5:22-23).

WHERE DOES CHURCH GROWTH BEGIN?

Clayton Pepper

● I believe that church growth begins with a knowledge of the subject.

Even though I grew up in the church, I did not learn until I was in my mid 20's that I should share the gospel with the lost. I had to learn church growth outside the mainstream of the churches' teaching program. Our emphasis has not been as much on *evangelism* as on *moral principles* and *doctrinal issues — dealing primarily with the needs* ***inside the body.*** Today, we have a choice to accept things as they are and assume that conditions cannot be improved, or to be determined to learn how to reach the lost, now that they do not come to the services to be taught.

● Most of our preachers say they never had any training on church growth and evangelism when they were in college.

One preacher said that when he got out of college he had a diploma in one hand and a Bible in the other but he *did not know what to do.*

Any training school, college or university which assumes the respon-

sibility of teaching men to fill pulpits in the Lord's church should have a comprehensive TRAINING PROGRAM in all facets of personal evangelism and working with people. Jesus' three-year training program with the apostles should teach us this basic and vital truth

● Church growth authorities suggest that preachers read one book per month on church growth.

The writer has put together a list of twelve books as suggested reading. You may receive this list by calling the Ohio Valley College Bookstore at 1-800-879-7323.

● We must have deep convictions, thus believing the passages in the Bible which deal with reaching the lost, as strongly as we believe "doctrinal" passages.

Brother Willard Collins once said, "Could it be that we have emphasized certain passages in our teaching and come to believe them, while there are other passages which have not been taught and therefore are not believed?"

I do not see the same loyalty to *evangelism* as I see to many other matters. Therefore there is no real grief because we are baptizing very few. One church of 500 in attendance extended 154 invitations at the end of the service during the year in which **no one** responded to obey the gospel. More and more, this has become normal rather than abnormal. After a video was shown at a middle Tennessee church concerning mission work, and pictures of baptisms were shown, one of the elders remarked, "I am glad you showed that because there are people in this congregation who have **never seen a baptism!"**

A 10 year study of preachers' work found the following:

● A preacher whose major focus was on *administrative activities* and *attending meetings* saw the congregation reach a plateau of non-growth.

● A preacher whose major focus was on *counseling* and *visiting members* saw the congregation decline.

- A preacher whose major focus was on *sermon preparation* and *study* saw the congregation reach a plateau of non-growth.
- A preacher whose major focus was on ***visiting and studying with prospective members*** and ***training members*** saw the congregation grow. These very actions produce an acute awareness of lost souls and a resulting excitement about salvation that are healthy and contagious within the congregation.

Training Members for Evangelism

The roots of Acts are in the Gospel accounts. Obviously, the training of the twelve is an inspired example of *how to equip* people to take the gospel to the lost. When the proper *spiritual growth* takes place, it automatically leads to numerical growth. We can learn from the following principles used by Jesus:

- **Selecting** those to be trained to win souls. Not everybody is necessarily fitted for this. The talents of some will lie elsewhere in the work of the Body. But those who have the desire and natural capability to teach need to be taught how to reach out with love and truth to the lost of the community.
- The importance of **association** with workers in training.
- The leader must impart to those in training the necessary **instruction** and **assistance.**
- Training must include **demonstration teaching.**
- Jesus **delegated** responsibility.
- Jesus **supervised** the Apostles' work.
- **Christ's work was reproduced** in the lives of those He trained.
- A greater degree of **commitment** and **consecration** is needed for Christians to become evangelistic.

It is obvious that we have an **abundance of resources** but **limited focus** on evangelism. No matter how "good" we are or how much social and benevolent "good" we do in the world, our focus does not become "evangelism" until **the lost have been confronted with the gospel.** ⇧

Clayton Pepper works with Restoration Network International in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Tips for an Effective Visitation Program

Compiled by Clayton Pepper

People who are sick, and the families of the sick, are potentially in special need of help and encouragement. Those in charge of developing visitation programs should make this area high in their priority list, both for the opportunity to serve and for the long-term beneficial results for the sick as well as those who visit them.

Visits to the Sick

A. Why should you visit the sick?

Jesus is pictured as saying to those in the Judgment scene in Matthew 25, *"I was sick,* (verse 35) *and ye visited me"* (verse 36). Those on the left hand had not fulfilled this responsibility. It is therefore important to our soul's salvation to visit the sick. This means more than merely making a call upon a sick person. Most always there is some unmet need. The opportunity for service is there if we will but look for it. If a mother is sick, there is often need for someone to keep the children, bring in food, wash the clothes or possibly stay with her while her husband is at work. Problems are often multiplied when a widow with small children is sick. When the bread winner is sick, a need for the necessities of life may arise.

1. Offer comfort, strength and encouragement.

2. Determine what ways the church can help.
3. Obey the teaching of God (Matthew 25:31-46).
4. Give spiritual counsel when needed.

B. How do you make this type of visit?

Here are some practical suggestions to observe when visiting the sick in hospital, at home and with those who are shut in or in some other way afflicted:

1. Observe rules and regulations concerning visiting hours, etc.
2. Always consider the well-being of the patient. We want to help and not harm in any way.
3. Do not force yourself upon the patient. If there is a nurse on duty, ask for permission to visit with the patient. If the door to the patient's room is closed, knock and wait until invited in.
4. Do not visit too soon after an operation or when the visit would be a strain on the patient.
5. Make your visit personal, not just a routine "matter of fact" job you want to get done.
6. Be cheerful. If you do not leave the patient in a more cheerful frame of mind your visit has not been successful.
7. Not more than two visitors should enter the sick room at one time.
8. Do not be overly inquisitive concerning the illness. If he chooses, he can voluntarily give information concerning the condition.
9. Do not assume the role of the doctor or nurse by giving "free" medical advice.
10. Avoid gruesome accounts of illness which only tend to depress the patient. Do not relate to the patient your own illness or those of your friends unless by doing so you can cheer and reassure him.
11. Do not visit too long. Do not appear to be in a hurry to complete your visit, but do not make the mistake of staying too long. Usually five or ten minutes at a hospital is long enough. Visits to nursing homes or private homes may be longer, but don't stay too long.
12. Ask if there are any errands or other service you or other members of the church can render. If so, attend to them or see that someone else does. Arrange for a short period of worship with him on the Lord's Day if he is in condition to take part in it. ✝

How to Grow a Church

David Tarbet

Most congregations say they want to grow. Leaders challenge with goals – goals that are realistic and measurable. These are two major ingredients necessary for a church to grow: **talking about growth**, and **setting a target** to "shoot for." But there must be more.

We need to do more **praying** for God to give the increase — we need to hear those who lead in public prayer beg the Lord to "grow" the church. Jesus assured us that without Him we can *"do nothing"* (John 15:5). And, we need to include the church in our private devotionals every day.

Individual members of the congregation must have a genuine feeling of **personal responsibility to share the Gospel with others.** It is not enough simply to attend the services (although this is very important too!). Churches grow numerically because individual members of those churches make a commitment to invite outsiders *to attend the services, to hear the Gospel preached, or to join in a home Bible study.* Philip influenced his friend to become a disciple by extending this invitation: *"Come and see"* (John 1:46).

We all need to be **excited** about the church. How easy it is to take for granted the privilege of being Christians! But spiritual apathy never grew a church. Those afflicted with the handicap of lukewarmness need to count their blessings again, and humbly thank God for what they have received by grace — the status of being God's "family". Andrew persuaded his brother to become a disciple by being excited and confident of his faith, *"We have found the Messiah!"* (John 1:41).

Churches grow **when the members make things happen.** This is not a time to sit back and watch. *It is a time to get in there and work. It is a time to pray* for God to open doors so we can **find** people who are teachable — *a time to be alert — a time to extend the invitation.* ✞

David Tarbet is the preacher for the White Rock Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.

True Worshipers

Randall Caselman

At Jacob's well, Jesus gives us insight into what God expects as we worship Him. Using this well-known narrative, let's examine what constitutes acceptable worship.

● ***God desires to be worshiped.*** God seeks those who will worship Him. Did you catch it? God ***SEEKS.*** God is not just sitting around with His arms folded, drumming His fingers, hoping that we will find Him and come to worship Him. God has intervened in human history:

He sent His Son to save us.

He gave us His Word so that we can know Him and what pleases Him in acceptable worship.

He provides us opportunities to worship and serve Him.

God continually pursues people. Will God run? Read the narrative of the prodigal once more.

● ***Worship must be in SPIRIT.*** Worship has more to do with what *GOD is like* than with *what we like.* God is Spirit and those who worship Him

must worship Him in spirit. You see, God deals with us:

In the realm of the mind
In the heart
And in the soul.

True worship is not some mindless ritual we go through...True worship comes from the heart. Jesus said that the first and greatest command is to love God with all the HEART, MIND, SOUL (Matthew 22:37,38). So true worship will be in that realm, *in the spirit, in the place of the heart, in the mind.* Folks, mindless worship is neither true nor pleasing to God.

● **Worship is to be in the realm of TRUTH**. There are three ways for us to understand what Jesus is saying here about what constitutes worship in truth.

One is that our worship must be according to truth, according to what is right. We pay honor and respect to Him when we worship according to truth, His truth from the Word.

A second understanding of the word that is translated truth is genuineness...Honesty. You see, true worship is to be genuine, honest, from-the-heart worship, and not hypocritical.

Thirdly, ***in truth worship*** can also be understood as ***in Jesus worship***. Scripture tells us that Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE (John 14:6). Jesus said, *"There is no way to the Father except by Me."* Acceptable worship must be in the name of Jesus.

● **Worship takes priority over other activities.** The woman came to the well to draw water, an important task. However, when she discovered Jesus, that task was delegated to second place. Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"* (John 4:29). Next Sunday, what will take priority over our worshiping Him in spirit and truth?

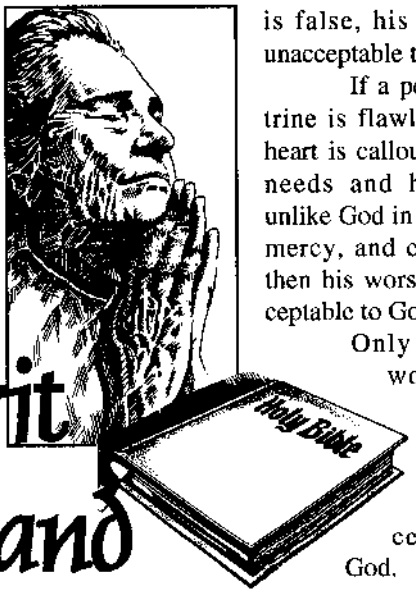
● **True worshipers are motivated to serve.** When we understand that Jesus is prophet, priest, king, savior — God in the flesh — we will automatically serve Him by telling others, just as the woman did. They said to the woman, *"We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, we know that this man really is the Savior of the world"* (John 4:42).

Jesus is telling us that TRUE WORSHIPERS, worshipers that God seeks, are those who will place a priority on worshiping Him from the heart and in truth, in genuine honesty through His Son Jesus. ✝

Randall Caselman is the preacher for the church of Christ at Bella Vista, Arkansas, U.S.A.

In Spirit and In Truth

Rick Cunningham



"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

In 1975, I made my first attempt at preaching, offering a devotional at a Wednesday evening service. I used this text and made an appeal for us to work at both requirements, to worship in both spirit and in truth.

As a young Christian I had witnessed many clashes over "spirit" and "truth" issues. Some emphasized "spirit" to the neglect of and even in opposition to "truth." Others stressed "truth" in doctrine with almost no love, kindness, or mercy whatsoever. And each side fought against the other.

Now, I have preached literally thousands of sermons, and yet I still come back to this same old problem. Half-baked Christianity still detracts from what Jesus demands from us all — *worship in spirit and in truth.*

If a person's spirit is loving and generous to others, yet his doctrine is false, his worship is unacceptable to God.

If a person's doctrine is flawless, yet his heart is callous to other's needs and he remains unlike God in forgiveness, mercy, and compassion, then his worship is unacceptable to God.

Only those who worship in *"spirit and in truth"* are pleasing and acceptable to God. The two are not exclusive of each other. Those who wish to turn everything into a polemic identify themselves as falling short in either one area or the other.

What about you? Are you an extremist? If so, why don't you seek to balance your life as God instructs? Why not worship *"in spirit and in truth?"* ✝

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

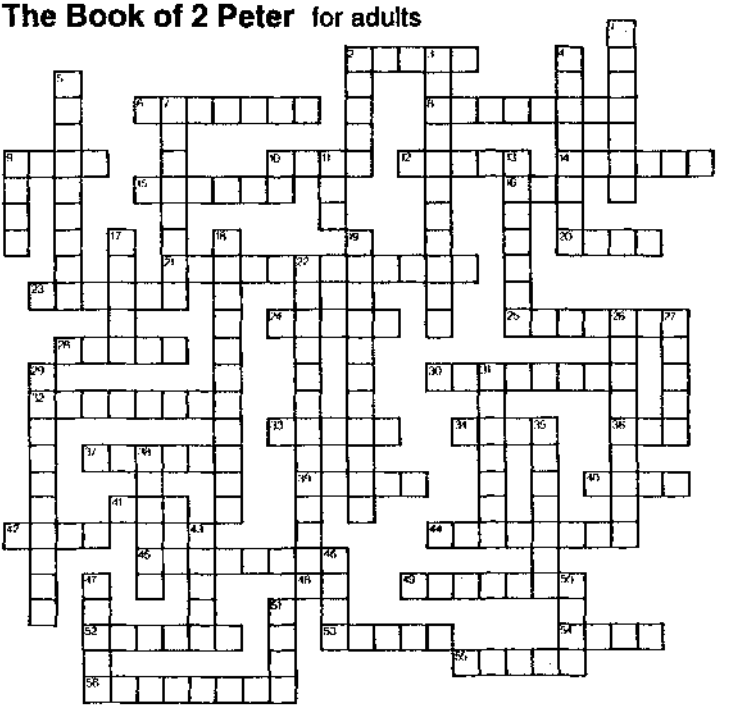
THE LORD'S SUPPER

J. Robert Brooks

Who instituted it? Jesus (Matthew 26:26-30).
When? The night of His betrayal by Judas (1 Corinthians 11:23).
Why? To establish a lasting memorial until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26).
What was used? Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Luke 22:18,19).
Who were there? Jesus and the 12 apostles (Matthew 26:20).
What feast had just ended? The annual Passover feast (Luke 22:13,14).
What did Jesus tell each person to do? To eat the bread in memory of His body, and to drink the cup in memory of His blood (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).
Where was this new memorial feast to be placed? In His Kingdom (Matthew 26:29).
What did the apostles do with it after Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit? They made the Lord's Supper an act of worship in the church (Acts 2:41,42).
How often did the church observe the memorial feast? It was a weekly observance on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
Where was it eaten? In the church assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18).
Who ate? Disciples of Christ/Christians.
What was each person exhorted to do? Examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).
Was it possible to do it unworthily? Yes. One could eat and drink without discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).
What else is this feast called? A Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16).
Is there a church where one can observe this simple memorial feast in honor of Christ? Yes. We in the churches of Christ observe it every first day of the week as nearly as possible like Jesus said to do. ✞

J. Robert Brooks preaches for the Springhead congregation in Plant City, Florida, U.S.A.

The Book of 2 Peter for adults

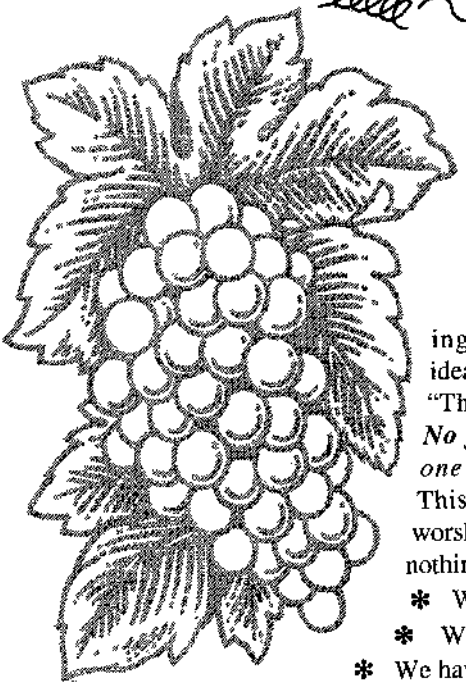


DOWN

1. Opposite of evening
2. Splendor
3. One of God's laws
4. Instructors
5. Information & facts
7. Not forget
9. Repudiate
10. Opposite of she
11. Untruth
13. The skies
17. H_2O
18. Discipline
19. Annihilation
22. Sin
26. Person in power
27. Robber
29. The word of God
31. Opposite of nighttime
35. Source of a stream
38. Servants who are owned
43. Opposite of war
46. Builder of the ark
47. Innermost part of a person
50. Opposite of heaven
51. Brain

ACROSS

2. Unmerited favor
6. Pledge
8. Tall hill
9. Sunrise
10. Righteous
12. Inhabited planet
14. Desiring to eat food
15. Save from harm
16. Organ of vision
20. Distant sun
21. People who have seen an event
23. Epistle
24. Unwavering trust
25. One who serves
28. Planet Earth
30. Legal decision
32. Forming the earth
33. Not false
34. Opposite of nays
36. Not on
37. Slave owner
39. Rain & thunder
40. Opposite of death
41. Opposite of night
42. Destroy by fire
44. Forever
45. A selection by God
48. Opposite of yes
49. Flaw
52. Not awake
53. Respect
54. Source of light
55. Process of testing
56. 999 + 1



No Fruit

Mark Aites

One of the greatest personal evangelism directors of our day, brother A.D. Wright, made the following observations concerning the idea of no fruit:

"This describes most of us today. ***No fruit.*** Some have not brought *one soul* to Christ. No, not one. This describes those who come to worship when the door is open, but do nothing more.

* We have sung 10,000 songs.
* We have heard 7,000 sermons.
* We have prayed 20,000 prayers.
* But, we have not convinced one soul, not even ourselves.
* We have been 'setting' in the same 'nest' for twenty years and have not 'hatched' anything yet."
* No personal work program at all. Let the preacher do it or somebody else or let the work go undone. We are dead as far as saving the lost. We have leaves, but bear no fruit at all — just holding worship, — a church-house religion. Some congregations have no plans for saving the lost. Hardly a visitation program. No program at all for saving the lost from house to house.
* One billion dollars in church buildings, seven million dollars in custodian services, from fifteen to fifty-nine members are required to convert one person.

In Mark 11:12-14 the Bible says, *"And on the morrow, when they*

were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, 'No man ever eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.' And his disciples heard it."

I am afraid that, for many who profess to be members of the body of Christ, when the Lord comes again He will find only leaves. There are far too many Christians who have not borne fruit. Why? Is it apathy or indifference? Have we forgotten the Great Commission and its requirements of us: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark !6:15).

Think about it!

Mark Aites is a preacher of the Gospel in the U.S.A.

Raising Ebenezers

We sing (sometimes with more perplexity than insight) the song:

Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by thy help I've come;

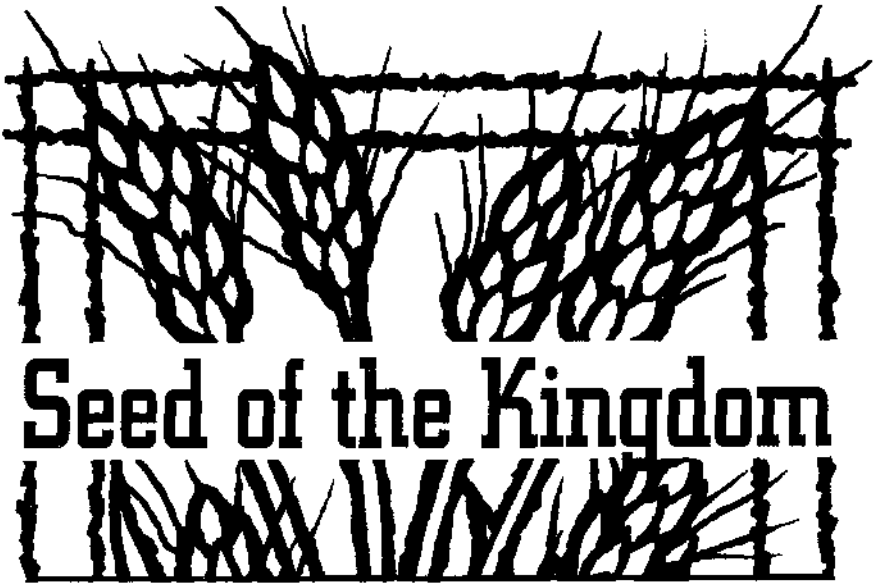
The word 'Ebenezer' means 'rock of help'. It was the name Samuel gave to a monument erected to commemorate God's help in a victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:10-12).

We, too, need to raise some Ebenezers — markers in our lives which say, "Thank you, Lord, for bringing me this far,..." After all, we are surrounded by blessings beyond our ability to count: *material prosperity, friends and family, sight, hearing, and mobility....* We are children of God, with the blessings of salvation and the hope of heaven...

What kind of Ebenezers shall we raise?

* ***Giving:*** When I give thought to my prosperity, I can raise an Ebenezer by giving back to God or to the needy.
* ***Caring:*** Perhaps I can thank God for my good health by taking time to visit someone who lacks it.
* ***Worship:*** I can express appreciation for my freedom to worship by using it! Study. Pray. Assemble. Sing.
* ***Evangelism:*** When I consider how empty my life would be without Jesus and His Gospel, I can show gratitude by making it possible for others to hear. Share the good news!

— Bobby Dockery



Seed of the Kingdom

Perry Hall

In Christ's great Parable of the Sower He explained that the various types of soils represent the various conditions found in the spiritual hearts of men. Some are too hard to penetrate. Some are too shallow to produce lasting results. Others are too crowded with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world, and are suffocated by them. Then He discussed the honest and good heart that brings forth fruit with patience.

Jesus explained that *"the seed is the word of God"* (Luke 8:11). We must accept and not deny what the Bible plainly affirms. When Jesus declares that the seed is the Word of God, that is final. This parable teaches concerning Christ's kingdom. The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom to the exclusion of absolutely everything else. If we desire a crop of corn or wheat, we must have the seed of that plant. The only way to produce corn is to plant corn. God's law of reproduction is immutable. Every seed produces only after its kind.

There has never been any way to convert people except to teach them only the pure Word of God and persuade them to receive it. *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"* (Psalm 19:7). The New Testament is the seed, the law of God, for the Christian age. No human creed can produce conversion of an alien sinner to Christ. A human creed is not the seed

of the kingdom. It is the seed of a human denomination that had its beginning long after the establishment of the kingdom of God. The New Testament makes Christians only and the only Christians, due to the unchanging reality that every seed produces after its own kind. It tells those who are lost what they must do to be saved. It shows examples of New Testament conversion.

May we receive with meekness the implanted Word unto the saving and purifying of our souls, being born again, not by corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever (James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:25). ⇧

Perry Hall is a gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, U.S.A.

If, in the Lord's body, I want only to fellowship a congregation which fills my needs, I place myself in danger of being always at the mercy of my surroundings, always the receiver, dependent on the will of others.

If, in contrast, I look for a congregation with needs which I can fill with God's help, I will be in control of my life — through Him — and will always be growing through my efforts to meet the needs of others. — BBC

What Is Resurrection?

The promise is made to Christians in Romans 8:11, *"...He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies...."*

In order to know what 'resurrection' means, we must look at Christ, the first human to come forth from the grave to die no more. Jesus was crucified on a cross. After six hours of agony, *"...Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His Spirit"* (Matthew 27:50). His body was taken down and a believer named Joseph, *"...wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb"* (Matthew 27:59,60).

However, when mourners went to the tomb after three days, they found the seal broken and the tomb empty. Angels explained, *"He is not here; for He is risen"* (Matthew 28:6).

As the body without the spirit is dead, so 'resurrection' means that the spirit has been reunited with the body, a living soul.

NEXT: How do we know Jesus was resurrected?

It IS Within Our Power!

Demar Elam

The feeling of being in control of a situation can be an enormously satisfying experience. To have something to accomplish that you know is within your power is confidence building. Every Christian should be filled with a sense of confidence as he or she lives the Christian life from day to day. Why? *Because it is within our power to lift up Christ before the world.*

Christians are failing on many battle fronts today because they are not lifting up Christ to the world. In speaking of His death, Jesus said, *"And I, if I be lifted up from this earth, will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:32). There is, however, another sense by which Christ can be lifted up, and this lifting up is completely within our power. Christ needs to be exalted and lifted up in our present times. Jesus declared that He

would draw all men unto Him and that His death would be the means of accomplishing this objective. Because Christ was lifted up upon the cross of Calvary and died for our sins we have the privilege of lifting Him up before the world today as the source of redemption from sin.

We also can be lifted up. How? James 4:10 says, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."* Each person struggles with the problem of humility in this wealthy, self-centered, and pride-filled world of ours. Can't we see that much of our growth numerically and spiritually has been hindered by our failure to lift up the Christ? *Many of the ills that plague our great brotherhood would vanish overnight if we would begin lifting up Christ.*

The world is looking for Christ. Many may not be aware of their search, their yearning, their longing, but it is there within each one of us. What man will not tell you that he deserves more out of life than he has? Even faithful Christians have yearnings as we are restless souls from here to eternity. We shall not fully rest until we rest with Him!

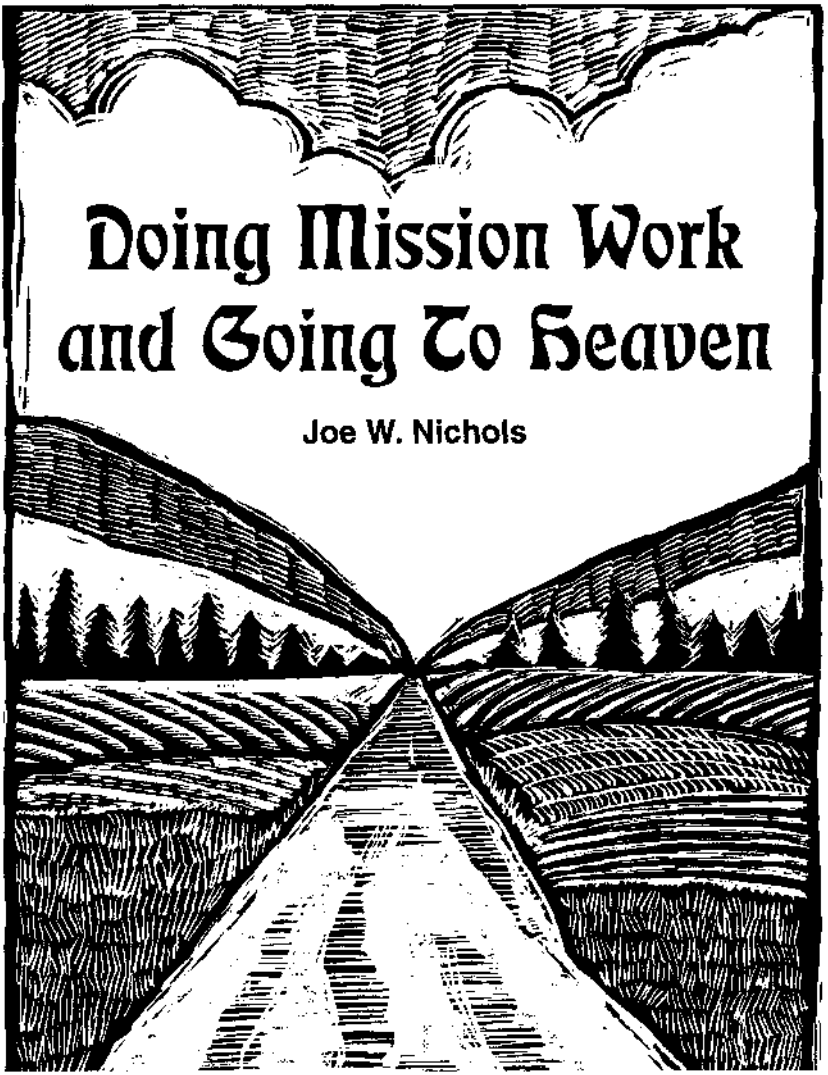
We must not fail to see our opportunities and to use them fully. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9) to save those who looked upon it, so also we must lift up Christ, that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. No, we must never lift up Christ to crucify Him afresh, but rather lift Him up as the crucified.

Christ is light, life, and liberty to those entrapped by the snare of Satan, and we Christians must not fail to lift Him up. It is within our power! We have control of the situation and need to act confidently in daily Christian living. Let each of us lift Him up in our speech, in our morals, in our attitudes, and in our actions. Let us live in such a way that all will know what Christ has meant to our lives. We can lift Him up so that others will not doubt our love.

Let us all lift up the Christ, for it is truly within our power. ✝

Demar Elam is the Director of Mission Studies at Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A.

It's better to declare the truth and be rejected than to withhold it just to be accepted.



Doing Mission Work and Going To Heaven

Joe W. Nichols

There is a certain parallel to be drawn in doing mission work and in going to heaven. Both involve looking toward the future, planning, and preparation. A careful attentiveness to these points is necessary in order to achieve the goal desired.

Mission work almost always

involves looking into the future. Often the commitment to go precedes the trip by as much as a year. The trip so often seems so far off.

Our commitment to go to Heaven causes us to look far ahead to a trip we plan to make. The apostle Peter states, *"...looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day..."* (2 Peter 3:12). We continue to progress in our commitment from day to day. The apostle Paul states, *"For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,"* (Romans 8:24). ("Hope" is earnest expectation to receive.)

Much planning and preparation is involved in making a mission effort successful. Travel arrangements, visa, monetary support, lodging, and basic work plans must be worked out ahead of time. Printed materials are often prepared for the work outlined. Personal preparation involving things at home and necessary needs while away from home is a must.

Similarly, if one is going to heaven he must plan and make proper preparation. Support and encouragement of the brethren is vital to meeting success. Many hours are spent in Bible study, worship, work, and in striving to influence the lives of others. This continues day by day, week after week, and year after year. The apostle Peter said, *"Yea...adding on your part all diligence,"* and lists certain additives necessary to the journey. He further states, *"If these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful."* He sums it up by saying, *"...if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:8, 10,11).

As with any travel plan, the day does finally arrive for the departure. That day anticipated for such a long time becomes reality. This is not without mixed emotion. Paul in Philippians 1:23 referred to such as being in a *"strait betwixt the two, having a desire to depart...yet to abide."* Loved ones are difficult to separate from. We separate from them some in our daily activities; perhaps this seasons us for longer separations. God assures us through His Word, however, that whatever separations we experience in Christianity are only temporary. With our separations, there is the promise of a happy reunion (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). With such thoughts in mind, with confidence we fly away. ✞

Joe W. Nichols works with the church of Christ in Vidalia, Louisiana, U.S.A.

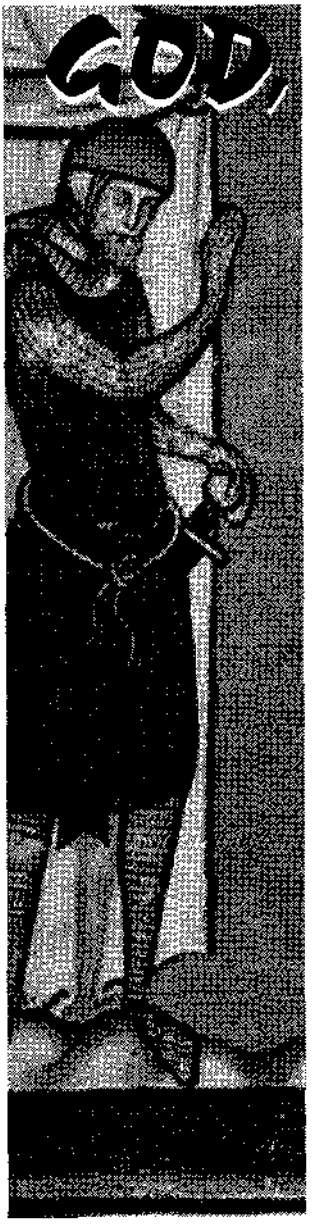
Who Am I?

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 home was in the area of Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, in central Asia Minor (Acts 14:6; 16:1).
2. **90** It is not known just how and when I became a Christian, but it was possibly during Paul's first visit to my city (Acts 14:7) because Paul refers to me as his son in the faith (1___1:2).
3. **80** I was imprisoned at one time (Hebrews 13:23).
4. **70** Though my mother was a Jewess, my father was Greek (Acts 16:1).
5. **60** In Paul's spiritual parental care for me, he wrote the Corinthians, *"Now if _____ comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore, let no one despise him..."* (1 Corinthians 16:10,11).
6. **50** I was left behind once in Berea (Acts 17:13-15), and sent ahead on another occasion to Thessalonia, Corinth, Ephesus, and Macedonia, to be an encouragement to those brethren (Acts 19:22; 2 Corinthians 1:19).
7. **40** Paul trusted me greatly, for he said, *"I have no one like minded"* (Philippians 2:19-22).
8. **30** In two letters to me, Paul gave much spiritual guidance for a young Christian and preacher (2 _____ 2:1-4).
9. **20** Along with Silas, Titus, and Luke, I was often a traveling companion of the apostle Paul (Acts 17;15).
10. **10** My mother's name was Eunice, and my grandmoth er was Lois. Both taught me faith in God (2 ____ 1:5).

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.



GIANTS & Grasshoppers

(A Lesson on Fear and Faith)

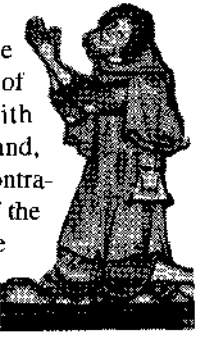
Texts: Numbers 13 & 14; Joshua 14

Reuben Emperado

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we certainly can do it."

While the children of Israel were camping in the desert of Paran the Lord told Moses, *"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."* (Numbers 13:2).

Twelve men were chosen to spy the land including *Caleb* and Hoshea who was also called *Joshua*. These men were sent by Moses to see the nature of the people and the cities they lived in. They were to observe their fortifications and defenses and see the condition of the land.



These spies explored the land for 40 days. At the end of that time they returned with some of the fruits of the land, and also with diverse and contradictory stories to tell. All of the men were convinced of the goodness of the land, but ten of the spies were

afraid of the inhabitants for they were "giants", and they further described the fortification of their cities as "reaching the skies".

They said: *"We went into the land which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is the fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the descendants of Anak there"* (Numbers 13: 27,28).

They also said: *"We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there* (the descendants of Anak from the Nephilim*). We seemed like grasshoppers in our eyes, and we looked the same to them"* (V. 32,33).

The fear of the ten spies had reduced them in their own eyes to the size of grasshoppers. And their fear destroyed the morale of Israel, melting their hearts and paralyzing them.

While the report of the majority was negative, Joshua and Caleb believed otherwise. They trusted on the promises of God. *"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said: 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we certainly can do it'"* (V. 30).

They further said: *"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them"* (Number 14:6-9).

Because of **unbelief** the children of Israel failed to receive the promise land. Forty years later, Caleb narrated their experience:

"You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'" (Joshua 14:6-9)

The difference is between **faith** and **fear**; between godly and worldly perspectives. Joshua and Caleb realized that God had called them to fight and posses the land. They

were to fight not with their own strength but with the strength of the Almighty God. They realized that God's strength was stronger than their enemies and greater than the obstacles.

The story is about **faith and fear, courage and cowardice.** A contrast of Joshua and Caleb with the ten spies will give us a better perspective.

Joshua and Caleb

✱ Joshua and Caleb were obedient men. They followed God wholeheartedly. They saw God's power and trusted in His ability to give the land into their hands.

✱ They were men of courage and deep conviction. They saw the land and the goodness thereof. They did not ignore the presence of a strong obstacle nor deny the strength of their enemies but they trusted in the power of God.

✱ They were men who were not influenced by the negative thinking of the crowd, the majority, nor were they influenced by fear or favor.

✱ They were men of true strength, both spiritually and physically. At the age of 85, when most men are retired, Caleb asked to be allowed to conquer the giants.

✱ Their faith in God reduced the giants of the land into grasshoppers in their own estimate. They saw that the real giant was God and the real grasshoppers were their enemies. Joshua and Caleb were not pigmies in their own eyes, because God was residing in their hearts.

✱ They **believed** in the promises of God, **claimed them and received them!**

The Ten Spies

✱ They were convinced of the goodness the land but did not believe in the power of God.

✱ They saw the difficulties, the strength of their enemies, and the fortified cities, and their hearts melted in fear. Their fear reduced them to mere grasshoppers in their own eyes; it paralyzed and demoralized them, and as a consequence, they failed to receive the promises of God.

✱ They had omitted God from the total picture. The obstacles blinded their hearts and they lost sight of the great God behind them.

✱ From fear they jumped into presumptions. Then they tried to overcome their enemies by their own power and they were defeated.

Faith and Fear

✱ **Faith** *sees* and *dares* and *triumphs* in the days of **overwhelming difficulties**, while **fear** *runs*, *trembles* and *fails* in the days of **overflowing opportunities.**

✱ **Faith** acts with unwavering courage and conviction, even when others think it cannot be done.

✱ **Fear** paralyses the strongest of men, while **faith** energizes the weakest of men. Caleb at the age of 85 still felt and acted as if he were no more than 40 years old, but the young men acted as if they were without strength.

✱ **Fear** delayed the promises of God, while **faith** waited patiently through the delays caused by faithless men.

✱ **Fear** canceled the promises of God. Their faithlessness had put them outside the circle of God's benefits, but **faith** was the channel through which later generations received the promises and blessings of God.

Conclusion

The conviction and courage of Caleb and Joshua were vindicated when, 40 years later, they entered the promised land. Out of the 600,000 men above 20 years old, only two were allowed to enter and posses the land, together with the younger generation. Their faith and courage were eventually rewarded but they had to wait patiently for 40 long years, a delay caused not by their own fault but by the fault and failure of others. When the majority of God's people lose faith in Him, even the innocent and the faithful will suffer for a time.

Our weapons are not swords and guns but the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). The battlefield is not in a distant land but within our minds and hearts. The greatest enemies we have to conquer are still our own fears and doubts.

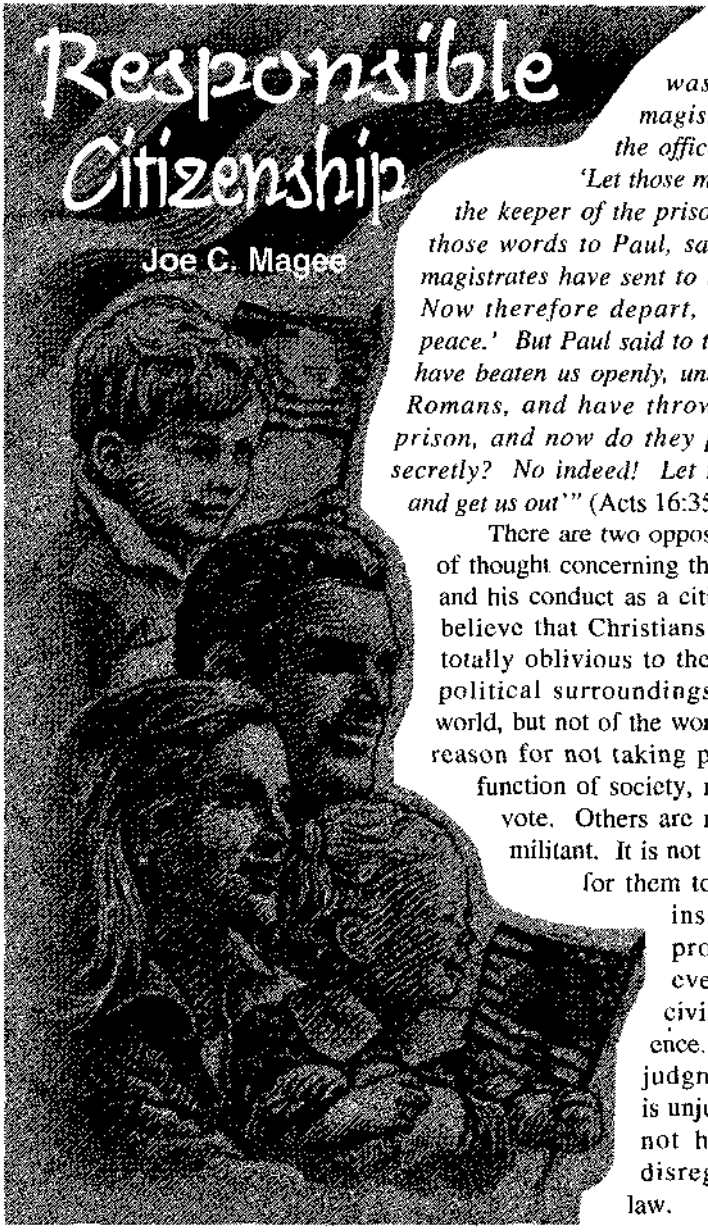
How can we conquer these personal battles? God's Word gives us the answers.

Today we, too, have our own "promised land" to claim, strongholds to conquer and enemies to fight. Our weapons are not swords and guns but the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). The battlefield is not in a distant land but within our minds and hearts. The greatest enemies we have to conquer are still our own **fears and doubts.** How can we conquer these personal battles? The lessons from Joshua and Caleb can give us the key. We can win these battles and conquer our fears by faith and trust in the promises and words of God. ✝

Reuben S. Emperado is a Gospel preacher, teacher, and radio speaker in Cebu City, Philippines.

Responsible Citizenship

Joe C. Magee



"And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers saying, 'Let those men go.' So the keeper of the prison reported those words to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.' But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison, and now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come and get us out'" (Acts 16:35-37).

There are two opposite schools of thought concerning the Christian and his conduct as a citizen. Some believe that Christians should be totally oblivious to their civic or political surroundings. "In the world, but not of the world" is their reason for not taking part in any function of society, not even to vote. Others are much more militant. It is not uncommon for them to stage sit-ins, march in protest, or even practice civil disobedience. If, in their judgment a law is unjust, they do not hesitate to disregard such law.

Paul's action in Philippi refutes both these attitudes. While grossly mistreated, Paul staged no civil unrest, nor did he take any sort of revenge against those at fault. Upon his release from prison, he simply encouraged the brethren and departed. But let's back up and see how Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen.

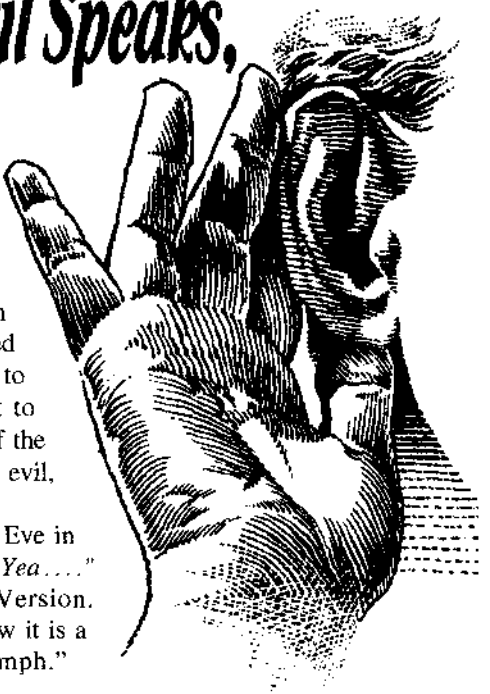
Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God (Romans 13:1).

Paul, acting fully within the law, was not content to let the magistrates get by with breaking the law. They not only had mistreated a Roman citizen, they had carelessly handled their responsibility as magistrates. By making a legal and proper issue of this, Paul solidly established a precedent that may have in the future prevented unjust action against the Philippian brethren. For instance, by Paul's action, the Philippian jailer, now a brother in Christ, was completely removed from direct involvement in this incident, thus saving him from any unjust reprimand.

The lesson here is — in times of civil stress, somewhere between total lethargy and emotional loss of control, there lies the wisdom of responsible citizenship. Not all governments are the same; and yet Christians can live under any form of government, and have over the centuries. We are taught to obey the laws of the land so long as they do not come in direct conflict with the laws of God. We in America have more freedom than most, but we must not abuse that freedom with law-breaking practices. We possess the freedom of expression, and we should use that freedom with common sense, not with emotional abandon. None would deny that injustices are rampant in our nation, from the federal courts down to local governments. But if we, in our effort to offset these injustices, break the law ourselves, are we any better than other law-breakers? Two wrongs do not make a right. Let's think with our heads and not our emotions. ✝

Joe C. Magee is the preacher for the church of Christ in Carthage, Missouri, U.S.A.

When the Devil Speaks, Someone Listens



Roy Beasley

Adam and Eve were in the beautiful Garden of Eden, where God caused to grow every kind of tree that was good to look upon and good to eat. Everything was perfect. God even gave to them a law to live by. He commanded them to dress the garden and to keep it, and warned them not to partake of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, lest they should *"surely die."*

One day Satan approached Eve in the form of a serpent and said, *"Yea...."* "Yea" is in the King James Version. However, in the original Hebrew it is a breathing sound, such as "Umph." *"Umph, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden."* Now, this question was asked to confuse, to create doubt in the mind of Eve. "Is that really what God said? Did I understand Him correctly? Could He have meant something else?"

Well, Eve understood what God had said. She replied, *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."*

Then the Devil said, *"Ye shall not surely die."*

The first time the Devil spoke, it was for the purpose of creating doubt. The second time he spoke, he plainly contradicted what God had said.

The Devil spoke and Eve listened. She partook of the forbidden fruit

and gave some to Adam, and he too did eat. Thus, they sinned, and the sentence of death was pronounced upon all of mankind.

The Devil spoke to Eve through the serpent. He spoke to Adam through Eve. He did not speak to each one personally. The Devil still speaks today, but not personally. He uses many agents, many spokesmen. Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). Satan can fill our hearts to commit sin. He has no trouble communicating. He is eloquent. He is convincing. *When the Devil speaks, there are always those who listen.*

There is so much misery, heartache, and death in the world today. This shows that *when the Devil speaks, someone listens.*

There are wars and rumors of war. There are terrorist attacks on innocent people. There are dysfunctional families. *When Satan speaks, someone listens.*

There are the problems of child abuse and spousal abuse. There is the drug problem. There is religious division. There are those who sow discord among brethren. *When the Devil speaks, someone listens.*

Jesus once said to Peter, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"* (Luke 22:31). Satan desired to have Peter, and he desires to have you and me to *"sift as wheat."* What does that mean?

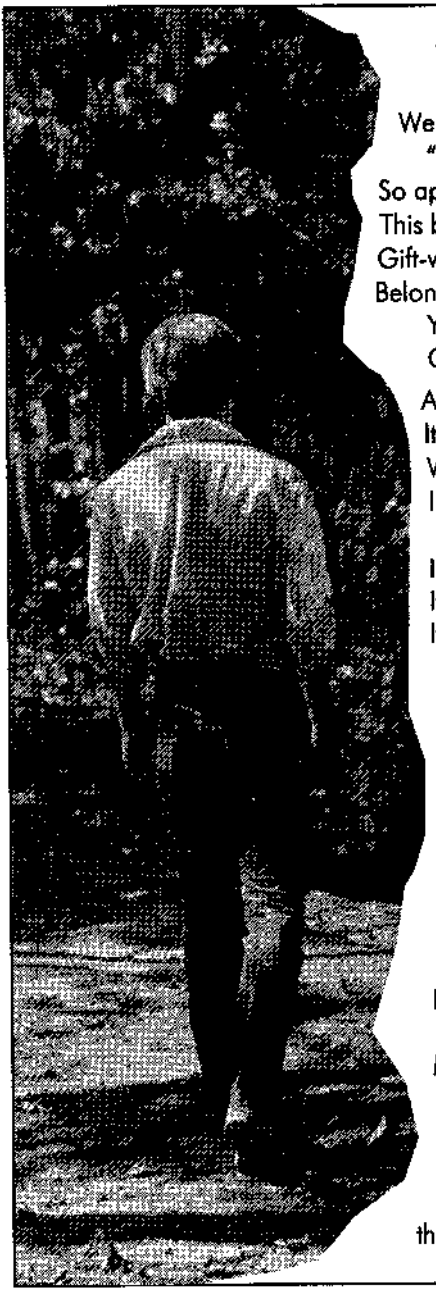
Take some flour in a container out of doors. Scatter it around on the ground. The wind will carry some of it away. Then try to gather it together again in the container. You will be able to find only a small fraction of what you originally had.

That is what the Devil will do to you if you will let him. He will put you through the mill. He will take away the goodness from your life — reputation ruined, innocence evaporated. He will sift you like wheat if you let him. And, when all that is worthwhile is gone, it will be impossible to get it back.

When the Devil speaks, don't listen. ✝

Roy Beasley is the Executive Director and speaker on Restoration Radio Network International, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

When problems come, the question is asked, *"Why did God allow that?"* But why do people not suspect the real culprit — **Satan** — who is the underlying cause of all that is bad and wrong in this world? Built into obedience to Satan are automatic consequences, not as a direct punishment brought by God, but as the inherent result of sin. — BBC



The Paradox of Love

We say the words,
"*Your* love in *my* heart...,"
So aptly describing
This bundle of emotion,
Gift-wrapped in golden ecstasy,
Belonging solely to you,
Yet unable to live
Outside *my heart.*

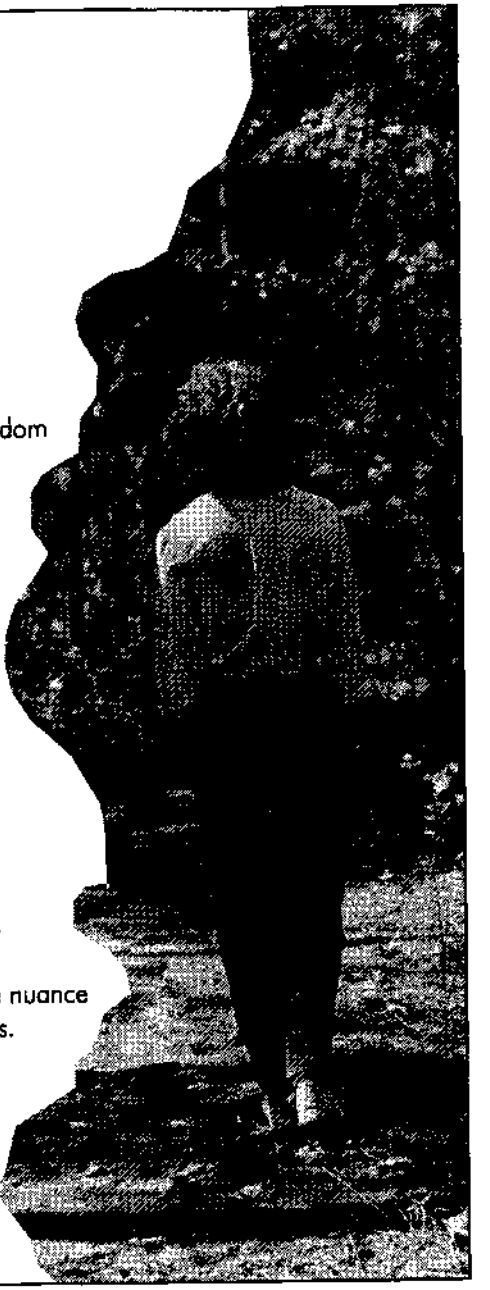
All through the day
It is I — not you —
Who feel this pulsing gift
In its sweetness
and gentleness,
In its inspiration,
Its loyalty,
Its faithfulness
and selflessness
As I grow in the attributes of love
Which permeate my soul
— attributes too large to be
contained —
Overflowing
In spirituality
and adoration of God,
In gentleness
and concern for others
Because *your love*
nestled in *my heart*
Must find expression
In loving words
and caring deeds
For those whose lives
touch mine
throughout the day.

And what of you
  for whom this love exists?

I ache with longing
To take this precious gift
And place it in your heart
So that, once — just once —
You could feel the sweetness
    And the joy
Your love has given me.

But God Himself devised the wisdom
Of these gifts exchanged:
  Your love in *my* heart,
  My love in *yours*,
So that a lifetime
  of loving
Is a lifetime
  of searching,
  of finding ways
To give to each other the fruit
    — born of our love —
  Gifts of gentleness
    and thoughtfulness,
  Gifts of self and selflessness,
  Gifts of closeness with God
        and with each other —
    An endless quest to express
      this elusive, inexpressible nuance
        of heaven in our hearts.

— Betty Burton Choate



Making a Christian Marriage

Toney L. Smith

In Matthew 19:9 the Pharisees came to Jesus tempting Him. Their question was concerning the lawfulness of putting away one's mate for every cause. Jesus replied to them, *"Have ye not read . . . ?"* Jesus simply referred them to God's Word. The answer is still the same today: ***"Have ye not read?"***

The home today is in trouble because God is left out of it. Many try to justify situations by using emotions. It did not change things when the Pharisees asked, nor does it today. We must ask, "What does God desire?" We must go to His Word and then apply these principles to our lives.

For a marriage to be as God desires we must understand that it is an institution from God. God arranged marriage for the welfare and happiness of His creation (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:4). This creation was in His own image (Genesis 1:26; 2:7). This makes him different from the brute beast. Man is made up of both physical and the spiritual sides (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The woman was made from the man (Genesis 2:21-24). Being made from man does not mean she is inferior in any way. Matthew 19:4 tells us that God made them *"male and female."* She is the weaker vessel only in that she is physically not as strong. She is made to be man's helper, not his

slave! They were made for each other (Matthew 19:5; Genesis 2:18). They are to complement one another.

Marriage is a supreme relationship in that it takes precedence over all human relationships. It is in the marriage that father and mother are to be left and the mate is to be exalted. Marriage is a contract, a contract made between each party and God. For the marriage to be one centered in truth, each must realize that this relationship is to be supreme.

When a couple enters into marriage they become one. Matthew 19:6 states they *"are no more twain, but one flesh."* In this passage we see that in the marriage union the husband and wife become **one** body (Ephesians 5:28-31). The married couple must be one, one in their mutual self-giving (1 Corinthians 7:4). They are one in their spiritual interest. If this is not so, there will be severe problems in the marriage. For any association to last there must be common goals (Amos 3:3). The Christian marriage is one in which each party is devoted to the other.

The marriage union is **for life**! I cannot emphasize this point strongly enough. **Marriage for life**. Too many today are having "trial" marriages. If it doesn't work, so what! Marriage must not be something so weak it just cannot last. It is something that both must vow to make last! Christ said in Matthew 19:6, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* ✝

Toney L. Smith preaches for the church in Dresden, Tennessee, U.S.A.

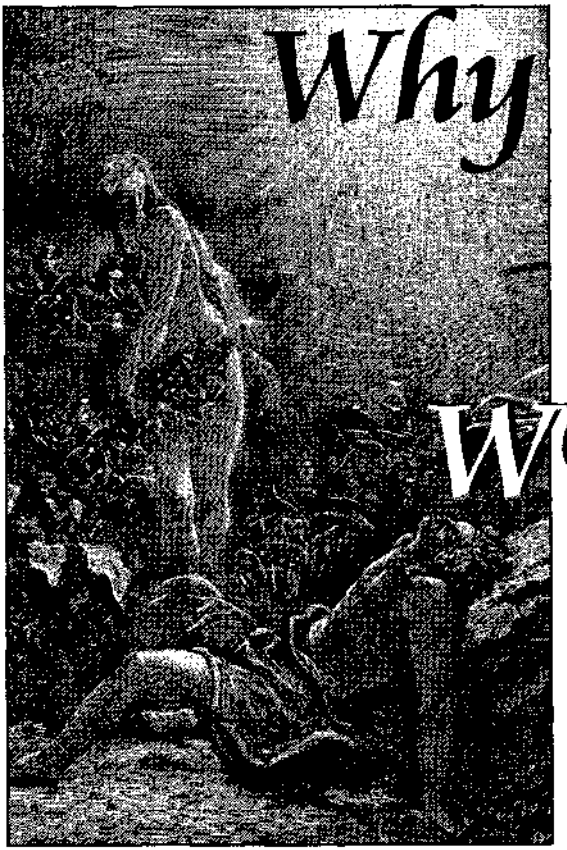
Highway of Life

I touch your hand now and then
As we travel the road of life
Together in sad times and good
Through many troubles and strife.

I have not been easy to live with
Sick, bitter, moody, and sad.
Forgive me for words I have said,
Remember the sunny days, not the bad.

God in His wisdom knows
In my heart there is a love
That will weather the storms of life
Until we reach that home above.

— Coleman Cabaniss



Why Did God Make Woman?

Nancy Wheat

Why did God make woman? Did God ever make anything with no purpose or with no reason for being? Of course not! 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-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.

Genesis 2:23,24 says 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 rolls 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 their wives as Christ loved the church, but this does not excuse us from doing our part. 1 Peter 3 tells us to win those kinds of husbands *"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, 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 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 a Christian wife and mother, living in Bartlettsville, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

The following were actual classified advertisements:

◆ Dinner special: Turkey $2.35; Chicken or Beef $2.25; Children $2.

◆ Now is your chance to get your ears pierced and get an extra pair to take home, too.

◆ We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

◆ Tired of cleaning yourself? Let me do it!

◆ Mt. Kilimanjaro, the breathtaking backdrop for the Serena Lodge. Swim in the lovely pool while you drink it all in.

◆ Used cars: Why go elsewhere to be cheated? Come here first!

◆ Christmas sale: Handmade gifts for the hard-to-find person.

◆ We will oil your sewing machine and adjust tension in your home for $10.

◆ 3-year old teacher needed for pre-school. Experience preferred.

Small boy's definition of a conscience: "Something that makes you tell your mother before your sister does."

Just about the time most of us learn all the answers, they change all the questions.

The young first grader had never had a physical examination before entering school. The doctor asked him,"Have you ever had any trouble with your ears and nose?"

"Sure," answered the boy, "They always get in the way when I take off my T-shirt."

"I've never been lost," said the guide, "but once I was bewildered for several days."

Little Johnny, who had never before seen a dish of gelatin dessert, stared as it quivered. "Go ahead and eat it," his mother ordered.

"Eat it?" questioned Johnny. "It's still moving!"

"I've been running boats on this river so long I know where every sandbar is located," boasted the steamboat pilot.

Just then the boat struck a submerged snag with a loud crunch.

"There!" said the pilot, "that's one of them now!"

Teacher: "What letter in the alphabet comes after A?"

Kindergartner: "All of them!"

When you have to get a new pair of eyeglasses these days, they invariably succeed in selling you two pairs — one regular and one tinted. They could really sell most of us a third pair. We need the third pair to look for the other two.

A little boy had been looking over some greeting cards for a long time when a clerk asked him, "Can I help you find what you're looking for?"

"You got anything in the line of blank report cards?" he asked wistfully.

Real estate salesman to prospect: "Yes, I do have a house in your price range, but it's condemned."

Going into debt often comes from spending what one tells his friends he makes.

The easiest way to get rid of a difficult task is to do it.

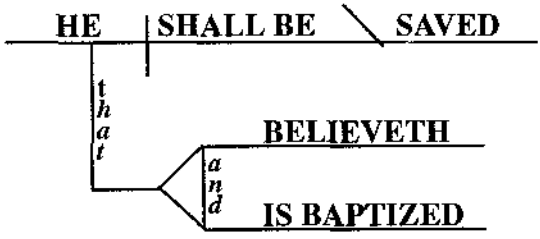
You know you're getting old when you start riding a bike and your kids take the car.

What Does Mark 16:16 Mean?

Albert Gardner

***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16).**

If these four words were all the verse said, every "he" would be saved, but the Bible does not teach universal salvation (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28,29). The above statement is modified by what follows, which limits it and tells which "he" will be saved.



Our Lord says, not every "he" shall be saved, but the "he" ***that believes and is baptized*** shall be saved.

Please notice that the two things, ***belief and baptism,*** are connected by the conjunction "and", which means that they are of equal value and are done for the same reason. One does not believe for *one* reason, and then be baptized for a *different* reason. This means that one could not believe *in order to be* saved and be baptized *because* he is *already* saved. If one is baptized to show he is saved then one also believes to show he is already saved. You can see they are connected by our Lord and are done for the same reason.

But a person may say, "I don't believe that." In that case, he must read the rest of the verse. Our blessed Lord said, *"...but he that believeth not shall be damned."* I beg you not to be found in that part of the verse. ✝

Albert Gardner is a preacher of the Gospel in Marmaduke, Arkansas, U.S.A.

Distress or Rest

Jeril (Polly) Cline

***"Because we have sought the Lord our God . . . He has given us rest on every side"* (2 Chronicles 14:7).**

Asa, king of Judah, had sought the Lord by removing the foreign altars and high places, tearing down the sacred pillars, cutting down the Asherim, and commanding that Judah seek the Lord God and observe His laws and commandments (2 Chronicles 14:3,4).

But here there is no permanent rest. Zerah, the Ethiopian, arrayed his one million men and 300 chariots against Asa's 580,000 valiant warriors in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah (2 Chronicles 14:8,9).

Asa's faith is on the line.

Asa called to the Lord his God, and said:

"Lord, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy Name have come against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee" (2 Chronicles 14:11).

You and I should not be surprised by what happened next.

The Lord routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before the men who fought in the name of the Lord that day. Asa and the people pursued them as far as Gerar; and so many Ethiopians fell that they could not recover, for they were shattered before the Lord, for the dread of the Lord had fallen on them.

It is upon their victorious return to Jerusalem that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah, and he goes to meet Asa with these Words:

"The Lord is with you when you are with Him. ***And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him;*** *but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."*

"For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law."

"But in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him" (2 Chronicles 15:4).

No nation can long endure without God. There is no rest — just distance, disturbance, distrust, and distress.

No family can long endure without God. There is no rest — just distance, disturbance, distrust, and distress.

No one can long endure without God. There is no rest — just distance, disturbance, distrust, and distress.

Asa understood that. The prophet went on: *"But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work"* (2 Chronicles 15:7).

Whereupon he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and all those who defected to him from Israel who saw that the Lord his God was with him.

At Jerusalem they assembled in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. They sacrificed to the Lord and entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul; and whoever would not seek the Lord God should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman (2 Chronicles 15:10-13).

"And all Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the Lord gave them REST on every side" (2 Chronicles 15:15).

Rest comes from the Lord. There is no other source of real rest. And it is there even in the midst of the world's distress if one is walking with the Lord. When our whole heart and soul belong to Him, He will take care of the rest.

"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). ✝

Jeril (Polly) Cline is a writer and preacher's wife, living in Blue Ridge, Georgia, U.S.A.

"Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Salvation By Grace Through Faith

1. Not of Works

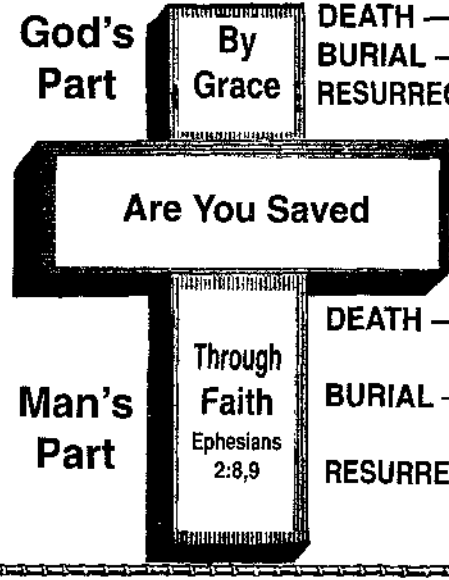
Merit? Romans 3:10, 23; Luke 17:10
Law? Galatians 2:`16; Rom. 3:20,28
Obedience? John 6:29; James 2:24

11. Saved By grace

God's Gift — John 3:16; Romans 5:8
Death, Burial, Resurrection:
John 15:13; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

111. Saved Through Faith

Man's Part — John 6:29; 20:30,31; Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:10,17; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30,31; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16.



Dillard Thurman

THE GOD OF FIRE

(Hebrews 12:29)

E. Claude Gardner

I. Introduction
   A. God is a God of fire, the same as a God of love (Hebrews 12:29; Romans 11:22).
   B. If we are impressed that the God of the Bible is the God of fire, then we will be reverent, hallow His name, love and obey Him, and come before Him with "fear" (Hebrews 12:28; Ecclesiastes 12:13).
   C. What is your response to God? Will you obey and live for Him?
      1. Song, "How Great Thou Art."

II. Discussion
   A. God of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-6; Acts 7:30-33).
      1. The burning bush got Moses' attention; the Lord then gave him the commission to deliver Israel.
      2. God manifested His presence by fire even as He did at Sinai (Exodus 19:18; Hebrews 12:18).
      3. In the presence of God men of the Bible have trembled or were in awe (Acts 7:32; Hebrews 12:21).
         a. Men today often treat sacred things lightly.
   B. God of Fire and Brimstone (Genesis 19:24-25; Luke 17:28-30; Jude 7).
      1. Wicked men were destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah.
      2. Fire consumed followers of Korah (Numbers 16:35).
         a. Sin of rebellion punished (Numbers 16:1-35).
      3. Fire destroyed golden calf (Exodus 32:20) and images (Deuteronomy 7:5; Isaiah 37:19).
   C. God Who Answers By Fire (1 Kings 18:19-40).
      1. The "Battle of the Gods" and Jehovah is exalted.
      2. God has a fire powerful enough to burn stones, dust, etc. (1 Kings 18:38).
         a. At the end of the world the earth shall be "burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

3. Under the old covenant God accepted sacrifices offered by fire (Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:7-9; 6:9-13).

D. God of Unquenchable and Eternal Fire (Matthew 18:8; 25:41).
1. There will be a hell of fire (Matthew 13:40-42,50; 2 Peter 3:7; Matthew 5:22).
2. The lost will experience the baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; 12:49).
3. Vengeance of God comes upon the disobedient (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 12:29; 10:31).

III. Conclusion
A. With this God there will be a day of reckoning and we must give an account to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).
B. Everlasting fire will be sent on the unfaithful and disobedient (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
C. If you properly fear God, you will obey Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14). ✝

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Scientists speak of stars, galaxies, even our sun as being so many "light years" away from us; that is, the number of miles light travels in a second (186,000) multiplied by the number of seconds in a year of time — millions and millions of miles. The size of the Universe, its complexities, and even its secrets are too great for the minds of humans to comprehend.

Yet, this Eternal Being, this holy and most supreme Spirit, this *God* has taken the trouble to reveal Himself and His mind to us through the wonders of His Word, life, nature, and the Universe, itself. Truly, the more we think on the greatness, the incomprehensibleness of God, the more we sink into silent awe in His presence.

Except for some of us. Some speak of "the Old Man in the sky". Others demand, "HEAL, Jesus!". Others make endless jokes about God, and then laugh at the ridicule they have heaped on this holy Entity of endless power. Today I saw a book with the slap-in-the-face title: **"Sit Down, GOD! I'm Angry"**. Just who do we think we are? — BBC

Fellowship With God and One Another

(1 John 1:1-10)

Jim Laws

Introduction:

1. The author of the book of John was the same John who was with Christ at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17), the Garden (Matthew 26), and was with Peter at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3).
2. John, by inspiration, wrote five books of the New Testament.
3. In this book of 1 John there are a number of words that become important:
   a. Love used, along with its derivatives, 51 times in the book.
   b. Truth (see 2:26-27).
   c. Death and life (see 3:14).
   d. Fellowship — the word which best expresses the purpose of the book itself. It is a partnership, a joint sharing with Christ (see Romans 8:16-17).
4. John mentions three things that need to be remembered from 1 John chapter one:

I. God Wants Us To Have A Living Fellowship, verses 1-3.

A. Heard, Seen, Beheld, and Handled — the apostles had an intimate acquaintance with and relationship with Christ. This refutes the Gnostic heresy which was presenting a challenge to New Testament Christianity in John's day. Jesus was and is; notice the phrase "was manifest."

B. Keep in mind the four stages of Jesus; it is a mistake for one to think that Jesus' life actually began in Bethlehem of Judea.
   1. Pre-fleshly state — prior to the creation.
   2. Foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Genesis 3:15); Abraham (Genesis 12); David and his household, the prophets (Isaiah 53).
   3. His life here on earth.

4. His glorified state back in heaven.

C. Just as the apostles had a close relationship with Christ, so can we. Even though we cannot see Him or touch Him as the apostles did, still, He is real and alive. We, too, can have a living and meaningful fellowship with Christ.

II. God Wants Us To Have A Joyful Fellowship, verse 4-7.

A. Something of the joy to be experienced in this fellowship can be seen in the close relationship members of the church sustain with one another (see 2 Corinthians 12:12-27). In the text you will notice a sympathetic connection which we are to have with each other. We have common interests, common goals, a unique comradeship.

B. The joy of this fellowship is made possible by the blood of Christ and its cleansing power to free us from the guilt of sin. Every Christian should come to know Romans 6 very well. In this passage one learns how we receive the atoning benefits of the blood of Christ. It tells one what he is to do to receive such. When is the blood applied to the sinner? At the point of obedient faith (study James 2:24-26).

C. In connection with the blood of Christ, notice that John states that this blood continues to cleanse the Christian; in fact, the tense of the verbs used indicates a continual cleansing (verse 7). Notice also that this continual cleansing is based on the continued walking in the "Light." Be sure to understand Hebrews 10:26-27 in this regard.

III. God Wants Us To Have An Honest Fellowship, verses 8-10.

A. To have an honest fellowship means that we are to deal honestly with ourselves and our spiritual condition before God. In other words, we must meet the conditions for fellowship. John says that God is "light." This pretty well sums up God's divine nature. God is pure, God is perfect, and there is no darkness in God at all (see Psalm 119:105,130). Notice that if we are to live like God and be "light," we must learn what that is from His word.

B. Contrast this with the gods of this world. Notice the modern trend of the Western World toward The New Age Movement. There is no salvation to be found here. God is the only source of light. It will not be found in your religious lodges or any other organization of similar stripe.

C. Remember, if we walk in darkness, there is no fellowship with God (2 Corinthians 4:4). Just as the word "light" sums up God very well as to His nature, so the word "walk" sums us up very well as to our lives. Walk is used as a metaphor here for how we live. We have this living and joyful fellowship if we are honest about our selves and sin, and walk (live) in the light. We must emulate the life God has presented to us.

D. Salvation is a matter of life and death, as Fellowship is a matter of light and darkness.

Conclusion: The fellowship we have is within the church, God's family, as it exists in the world. We are born into this family through baptism— water and the Spirit, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for the forgiveness of sins. As we walk in the light of this Gospel, we have salvation in Christ with the promise and expectation of eternal life with Him. ✝

Jim Laws is the preacher for the Getwell Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Reconciliation

Owen Cosgrove

Sin cried out, "I'm sorry!"
Grace answered, "I forgive."
Wrong said, "I deserve to die."
Love said, "Repent and live."

Guilt said, "I am torn inside."
Truth said, "Confess and be made free."
Life said, "I am heavy laden."
The Lord said, "Come to Me."

The weary said, "Where can I go
With evil's burdens sore?"
God said, "My child, obey My word,
And live forevermore."

Why Worship On Sunday?

Ken Tyler

Congregations worship on Sundays because some special events happened on that day.

◆ **Jesus rose on the first day of the week** (Mark 16:9). This verse states, *"Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week"*

◆ **The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on that day of the week.** *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:1-4). This day of "Pentecost" literally means "fifty days." It was a special feast of the Jewish Law which was to be observed fifty days after their Passover Feast. It is to be *"on the morrow, after the sabbath"* (Leviticus 23:11,15). So, the day on which the apostles received the Holy Spirit and began their work in preaching the Gospel was Sunday.

◆ **The church of the Lord Jesus Christ began on that day.** When the apostles began to preach salvation in the name of Christ, men repented and were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:37-42). They were added together in fellowship and began to evangelize the entire world. From this moment on in the New Testament, one can see a change, for the church of the Lord was now in existence.

◆ **The church met on Sunday for the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper** (Acts 20:7).

◆ **These congregations continued to meet on Sundays, and were given additional instructions about other things.** They were told to *"lay by in store"* on this first day (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). They were also to use this time for *"exhorting one another"* (Hebrews 10:25).

It was right for the Jews to observe the Sabbath, but this law was not given to Christians. In fact, Christians are taught in specific terms not to follow the Law of Moses (Romans 7:1-6). That law was fulfilled and nailed to the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14). Christians follow Jesus, and in doing so follow His new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-8). Under this new covenant, Jesus led the early Christians to worship on Sundays. ✝

Ken Tyler preaches for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, U.S.A.

What Is the Role of "Works" in the Plan of Salvation?

Wayne Jackson

Most Protestants, reacting to the "works system" of Roman Catholicism, have adopted the extreme (and unscriptural) view that works play no role in human salvation. Some allege that salvation is on the basis of "faith alone," while others argue that God chose the redeemed *unconditionally* before the world began.

Isn't it true, though, that the Scriptures state that we are *not* saved by works (Ephesians 2:9)? Yes, that is correct. But it is also the case that the New Testament asserts that we *are* justified by works (James 2:24)!

What is the solution to this seeming difficulty? Well, it is not, as Luther suggested, to repudiate the book of James as an inspired

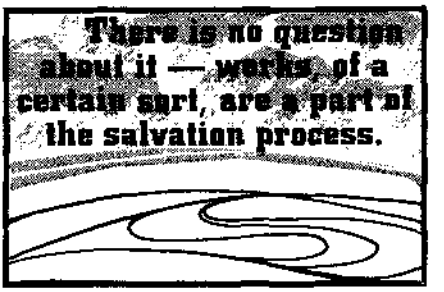
document! Rather, one must recognize that there are *different kinds of works* addressed in the divine record.

Works of the Law

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that no one can be saved by keeping the works of Moses' law. The apostle says that *"a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law"* (3:28). That certainly does not suggest, however, that *obedience* to Christ is unessential: in the same epistle, Paul affirms that freedom from sin is obtained upon the basis of obedience to the *"pattern of teaching"* (6:17; see also 6:3-4).

Works of Human Merit

In the Ephesian letter, Paul writes: *"For by grace have you been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works that no man should glory"* (2:8-9). The works here excluded are charitable works, which men pile up, thinking that such will justify them, while they ignore the sacrifice of Christ and His redemptive system. The Red Cross is famous for its benevolent efforts, but there is no justification to be found therein, because these are mere human efforts, wholly divorced from the mission of the Son of God. The man who boasts: "I am a good person; I do not need Jesus Christ," is guilty of the same mistake.



Works of Obedience

There is a class of works mentioned in the Bible which are designated as *"works ordained of God."* By this expression it is not implied that these are works which God Himself performs. No, they are works **ordained** of God — to be **obeyed** by men.

Consider John 6. The disciples inquired of the Lord: *"What must we do, that we may work the works of God?"* Jesus responded, *"This is the work of God that you believe on him whom he has sent."* Observe that this "work of (from) God" required a human response — that of believing. Regarding the term "work," as here used, J. H. Thayer commented: ". . . the works required and approved by God." Elsewhere Jesus promised victory to those who *"keep my works,"* (the works, commands, prescribed by Him), Revelation 2:26.

If, therefore, all "works" are excluded from the plan of salvation, then **faith** would be eliminated, for

it is clearly identified as a work. In some of his letters, Paul spoke of the "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; see also 2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Too, it must be noted that **repentance** is a component in God's scheme of redemption (Acts 2:38; 3:19), and yet, repentance is also classified as a work. Jesus once said that the people of ancient Nineveh "repented" when Jonah preached to them (Matthew 12:41). The book of Jonah observes, however, that God saw their *"works, that they **turned from** their evil way"* (3:10).

There is no question about it — works, of a certain sort, are a part of the salvation process.

Is Baptism a Work of Merit?

The truth is, most denominationalists have little difficulty in acknowledging that both faith and repentance are requirements for the remission of sins, even though they are classified as works. The real point of contention is baptism. Many feel that if it were conceded that baptism is essential to salvation, this would be equivalent to arguing that forgiveness is *earned*. Baptism, it is charged, is a work of human merit. Under this assumption, baptism is thus excluded as a requirement for salvation. But this line of thinking violates the Scriptures.

First, the only passage in the New Testament that even remotely identifies baptism as a "work" is found in Colossians 2. There, Paul says: *"Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead"* (2:12). The act of submitting to immersion is not meritorious; the labor is a *"working of God"* to produce redemption. One is spiritually energized by the operation of God when he submits to the command of baptism.

Second, the Bible specifically excludes baptism from that class of works which have no part in the divine program of salvation. Paul, in his letter to Titus, affirms that we are *"not* (saved) *by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves,"* (in other words, which we contrived and implemented as a means of justification.) Rather, *"according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (3:5). The *"washing of regeneration"* (an indisputable allusion to baptism) is plainly set in contrast to those human "works" which are ineffectual to save.

If you have been confused about the role of "works" in God's purpose for man, why not give the matter fresh consideration? ⇧

Wayne Jackson is the editor of *Christian Courier* and is a preacher in Stockton, California, U.S.A.

The Past...

Nicaragua, a relatively small Central American country, bordered on the north by Honduras and on the south by Costa Rica, has a current population of just over 4 1/2 million people.

Historically, Nicaragua was inhabited by various Indian tribes until it came under the control of Spain in 1552. The Spanish influence remains strong, with Spanish as the national language and Roman Catholicism, the religion of Spain, being the dominant belief of the people.

After being granted independence in 1821, Nicaragua was united for a short time with Mexico, and then with a union of her neighbors, under the banner of "United Provinces of Central America". Finally, in 1838, she became a separate and independent republic.

During the 1970's after an attempted overthrow of the government by the Marxist Sandinista Guerrillas, violent and wide-spread strikes resulted in Nicaragua's ruler, General Somoza, fleeing the country, only to be assassinated in Paraguay in 1980.

The Sandinistas took over not only Nicaragua's government but they also gave substantial aid to the guerillas in neighboring El Salvador.

However, in a surprising turn-about, the Sandinistas were defeated in national elections in 1990. To their place of power, Arnoldo Aleman Lacayo, was elected. He is a conservative politician, a former mayor of Managua.

History of the Nicaragua Work

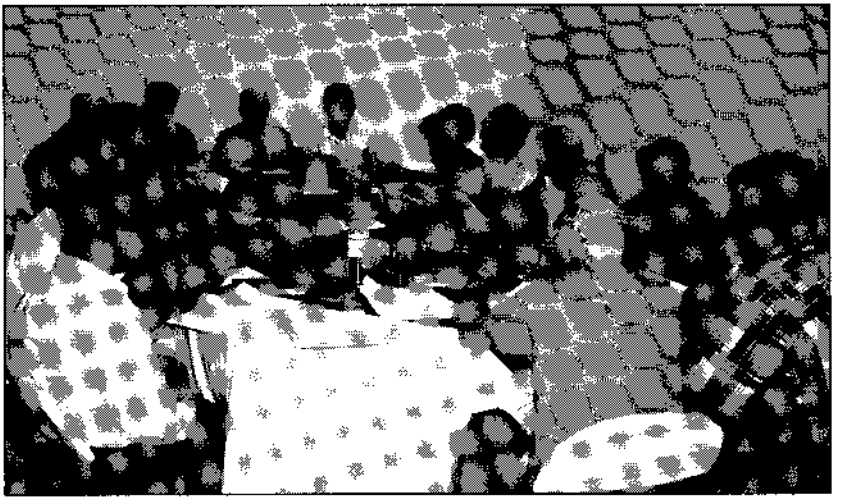
Allen Womack

Shortly after Nicaragua became a free country in 1990, efforts began to preach the gospel there.

The first organized evangelistic campaign was held at Tierra Prometida in 1993. A congregation was established and a building was completed in 1995. Already there were a few small congregations in other parts of the country.

Forrest Park Church of Christ began coordinating the mission efforts in Nicaragua.

The plan was to have a medical/evangelistic campaign each year at a site where there was no congregation. A trained preacher would be left at the location after the campaign, to work with those who had been converted. Thus was envisioned the establishment of new congregations according to a working plan.



Nicaraguan preachers sharing lunch during a special seminar.

The first medical/evangelistic campaign was held in La Ceiba in 1994. A building was constructed there in 1995. Today this is one of the larger congregations with over 100 members.

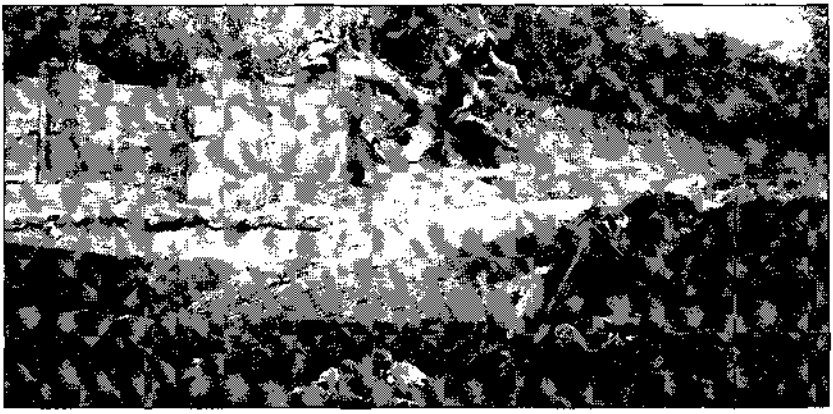
In 1995 the Forrest Park elders asked the church at East Ridge in Chattanooga to coordinate the work in Nicaragua. Their plan was to strengthen and emphasize the use of trained native men to preach the gospel throughout the country.

One of the most effective tools for reaching people in Nicaragua has been the use of medical campaign missions, as shown above.

The work has grown each year. One hundred and eleven souls were baptized in campaigns in 1998. Since 1995 we have employed a full-time native Christian to supervise construction of church buildings. It costs $4500.00 to build a 60 foot by 25 foot building which includes an auditorium, baptistry and two classrooms. The members furnish the labor. We have constructed 11 buildings to date in Nicaragua.

We are currently working with 27 congregations in Nicaragua, totaling 1,500 members. The East Ridge congregation solicits support from other brethren to carry on this work.

Relief During the Aftermath of "Mitch"

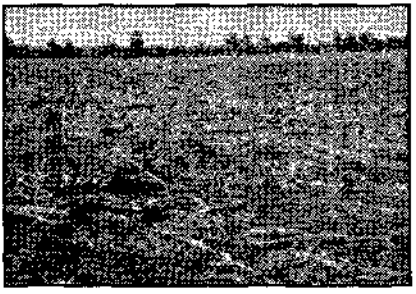


Hurricane Mitch left much of Nicaragua and Honduras in a state of devastation. Such scenes as these are everywhere.

A volcanic mudslide which killed 4000 people, with 7000 missing.

Nicaragua is a very poor country and the flooding from the hurricane made conditions even worse. As you will note from the picture above, a volcanic crater collapsed due to 40 inches of rain in three days and sent a large mud flow down the mountain. Two entire villages near the base of the mountain were completely destroyed. 4,000 are confirmed dead and another 7,000 are missing.

The mud flow continued through the lower areas, destroying roads, bridges, homes and crop



Crops were flattened in the fields by heavy rains and winds.

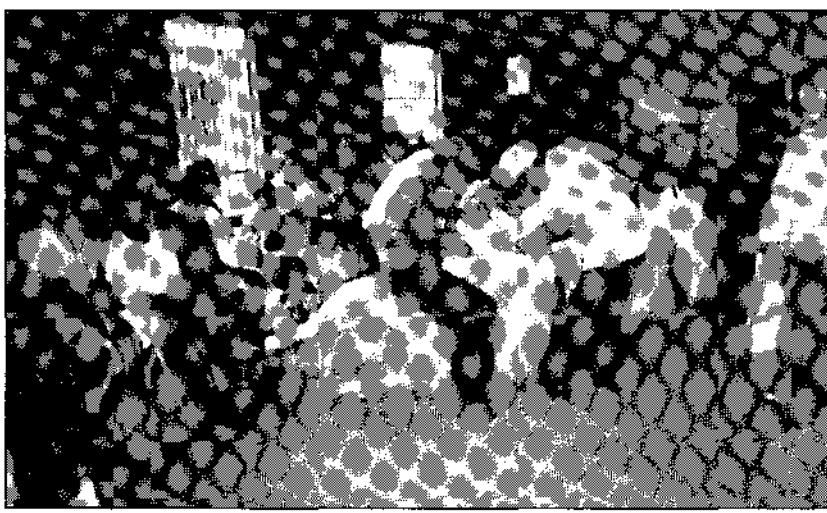
land. Of the 67 communities in the area, 48 were almost entirely wiped out by the floods. This has left 10,000 people without homes, food, clothing and access to clean water. Most of the refugees are living in tents furnished by the government.

Beans, rice, and oil were purchased at a wholesale market and 500 families were given these items. The government officials call a roll of those living in the affected area of La Ceiba. These same amounts will be given to the residences of this community four more times (every two weeks).

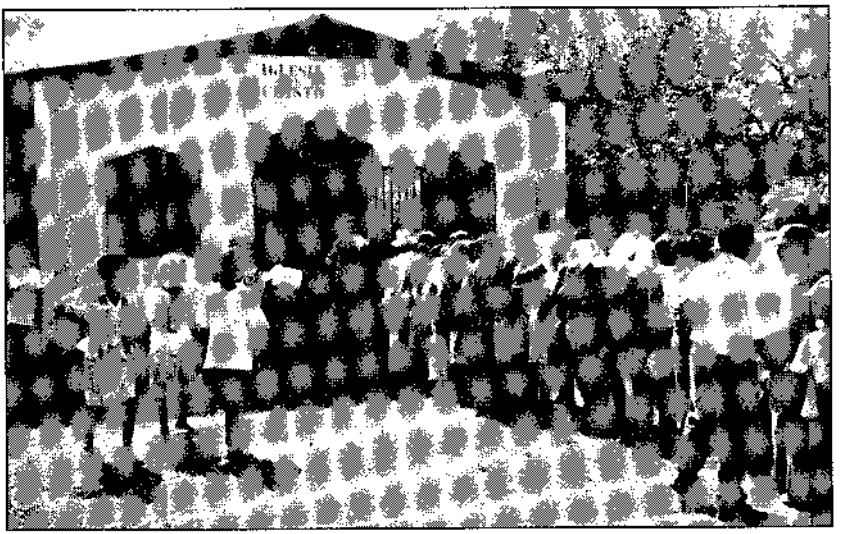
Medicine was purchased for several needy families. Money was given to two families to rebuild their homes which were lost in the flood ($500 each). 30,000 pounds of rice, 25,000 pounds of beans and 5,500 liters of oil were purchased. We will continue to send relief as funds become available. Also, several containers of clothing have been sent to Honduras and Nicaragua by concerned Christians throughout the United States.

We sincerely appreciate your generous support of this relief effort. Please continue to pray for the suffering people — victims of both spirtual suffering and physical suffering — in Nicaragua. ✝

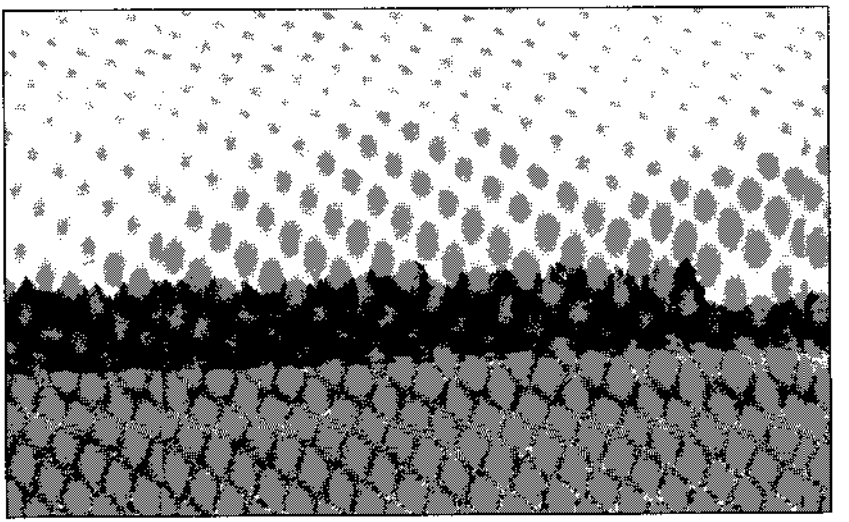
Allen Womack works with the East Ridge Church of Christ in its mission program for Nicaragua.



Many tons of food were given by Christians for flood relief.



Lines of people waiting their turn for food distribution at one of the buildings owned by the church of Christ.



One of the many active volcanoes in the Cordillera Mountain Range which runs along the western coast of Central America.

Suggested uses for individuals and churches for
THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL:

- Use them for family devotionals at home.
- If you own a business, dealing with the public, present copies regularly to your best customers whom you would like to convert.
- Give them to patients in hospitals and nursing homes.
- Use them in your personal work and in visiting newcomers; give to workers in banks, post offices, restaurants, and other business offices.
- Give a copy to each member of the congregation.
- Draw from them for bulletin articles.
- Keep them on display in libraries, hospitals, doctors' offices, barber shops, beauty parlors, and other public places where there is a magazine rack.
- Send them to your WBS students.
- Give subscriptions as birthday, anniversary, etc., gifts.
- Encourage the young men in the congregation to draw materials from them for their public devotionals.

(Return this form in an envelope with your check to the following address)

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Att. Byron Nichols

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☐ Please use my special contribution to send more copies of this issue to the mission fields of the world.

☐ Please accept my check to send a bundle to our missionary. ***The address is given below.***

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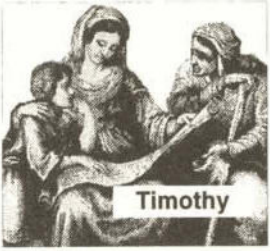
Answers to Puzzles

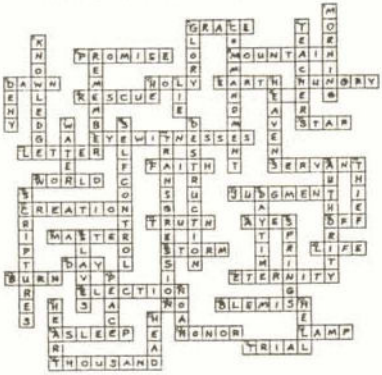
Verse Search — 22 (from page 46)

1. Theophilus.
2. All that Jesus began to do and to teach, until He was taken up.
3. Many infallible proofs; forty days; pertaining to the kingdom of God.
4. Jerusalem; promise of the Father.
5. From Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the end of the earth.
6. *"Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*
7. The eleven apostles, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.
8. According to Matthew 27:5, he hanged himself. The account in Acts shows that his decaying body fell and tore apart on impact.
9. Field of Blood.
10. Judas.
11. That he must have been with Jesus from His baptism until His ascension.
12. Barsabas and Matthias.
13. They asked God to show which one He had chosen.
14. "take part in the ministry.
15. **They cast lots.**
16. Matthias.
17. That they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
18. The Holy Spirit.

Who Am I? (page 75)



The Book of 2 Peter, page 66



For further information, please contact:

Republic of Nicaragua

Government: Republic
Head of State: President Arnoldo Aleman Lacayo

Secular Facts:

Location: In Central America, bordered on the north by Honduras and on the south by Costa Rica.

Land Mass: 50,893 square miles, about the size of Iowa.

Population: 4,583,379; density per square mile, 90.

Major Cities: Managua.

Language: Spanish.

Literacy: 66%, with free and compulsory education.

Religion: Roman Catholic (95%).

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (69%), White (17%), Black (9%), American Indian (5%).

Economy: *Annual per capita income:* $1,800. Arable land, 9% with 30% of the population in agriculture. *Industries include* oil refining, food processing, chemicals and textiles. Tourism brings in $78 million. *Crops include* bananas, cotton, citrus, coffee, sugar, corn and rice.

TV sets per 1000 population, 48; radios, 206 per 1000; telephones, 1 per 43; daily paper circulation, 31 per 1000.

Monetary Unit: Gold Cordoba.

The Church:

Congregations: Approximately 27 congregations, made up of about 1,500 members.

History: The Lord's church began its evangelistic efforts in Nicaragua in 1990, through the use of campaigns and medical mission efforts. Forrest Park Church of Christ in Atlanta, Georgia began the programs, and then the primary thrust of the work was turned over to the East Ridge church in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1995.

Each year, through campaign emphasis, the East Ridge brethren try to begin one or more new congregations, leaving behind a trained preacher to work with the new converts after the campaigners have gone home. Limited funds are supplied for construction of a church building, with the local members providing the labor. To date, 11 buildings have been constructed.

In 1998 Hurricane Mitch devastated the already poor economy of Nicaragua, as well as its neighbor, Honduras, leaving thousands dead and homeless. Many American congregations have given generously to provide food, clothing, and housing for those who have suffered so tragically. Others have provided funds for literature.

Front Cover: **Volcano in the Cordillera range in Nicaragua** (Images copyright © 1998 PhotoDisc, Inc.)