

VOLUME EIGHTY-SEVEN

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

God's Awe-Inspiring World

Our God

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. After traveling literally *10 billion light years*, the enormity of the Universe would be laid out as a tapestry before our eyes, with billions of galaxies made up of hundreds of billions of stars! The *infinite* size of the Universe, its complexities, and even its secrets are too great for the minds of humans to comprehend.

Yet, the Creator, the Eternal Being, the holy and most supreme Spirit, the God who formed all of this by the power of His word has taken the trouble to reveal *Himself* and *His mind* to us through the wonders of His Book, life, nature, and the Universe, itself. Truly, the more we think on the greatness and the incomprehensibility 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 limitless power. Today I saw a book with the slap-in-the-face title: “Sit Down, GOD! I’m Angry”. Just who do we humans think we are?

— BBC

The conversion of the Ethiopian man:

... The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

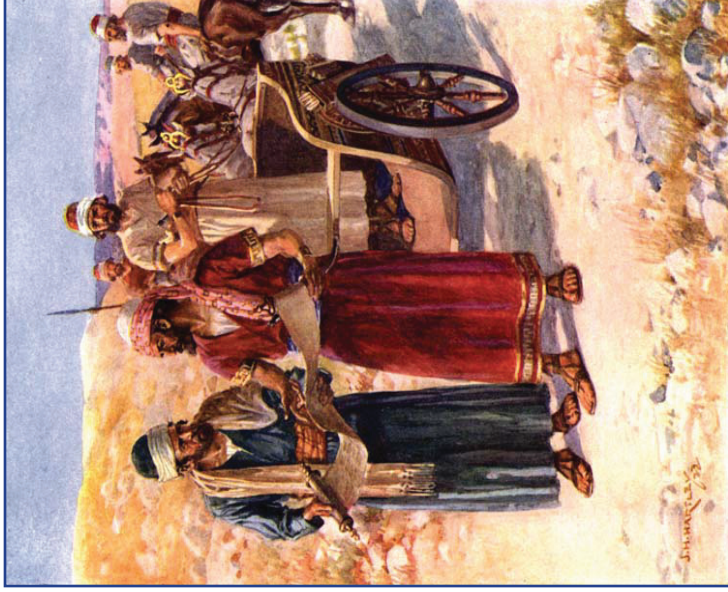
So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, **preached Jesus to him**. Now as they went down the road [in the desert!], they came to **some water**. And the eunuch said, **“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”** [Isn’t it obvious that when Philip “preached Jesus” to him, he explained the necessity of being buried with Christ in baptism for the forgiveness of his sins? Otherwise, why this question?]]

Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, **“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”**

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And **both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him**. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch



saw him no more; and **he went on his way rejoicing**.

What Is the Kingdom into Which People Are born?



“... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

“... on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” (Matthew 16:18,19).

“... by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“... And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body,” (Ephesians 1:22,23).

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

“... I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ...” (Ephesians 3:14,15).

THE kingdom
is

THE church
which is

His **ONE** body
over which

He is

THE ONE
Head.

THE church
is the **FAMILY**,
the **BRIDE** of

Christ

who wears

HIS NAME.

Is the church of which you are a member called by **the name of Christ**?

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



"The Pattern of Sound Words"

Byron Nichols

The word "*sound*" is generally used in the Bible as an adjective to describe something, and its typical meaning has to do with good health, whether physical or spiritual. This is not the typical way that we use the word "*sound*" today, but it is commonly used in this manner in the Lord's Word.

Let's look at some examples of the use of this word in the Scriptures, also making some present-day applications to the proper use of this word "*sound*".

Some Examples of the Use of the Word "*SOUND*" in God's Word

1. Safe and Sound. I'm confident that most of us have used the expression "safe and sound". Someone may have been reported as "missing", but fortunately the person is later found, unharmed and in satisfactory condition. In such situations it is commonly said that he/she was found "safe and sound".

This very expression is used by Jesus in Luke 15:27 as He told of the return home by the wayward son (Prodigal Son), and the son is described as being "*safe and sound*". The idea being expressed is that the son arrived home in apparently good condition.

2. Sound Wisdom. Proverbs 2:7 says, "*He stores up sound wisdom for the upright...*" (All quotations are from the New King James Version.) We read in Proverbs 8:14, "*Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom...*" The admonition to "*...Keep sound wisdom and discretion*" is found in Proverbs 3:21.

3. Sound Heart. “*A sound heart is life to the body...*”, according to Proverbs 14:30. The second part of this proverb contrasts that by pointing out that “*envy is rottenness to the bones*”. Our spiritual heart can have a very definite effect on our physical body.

4. Sound Speech. In the New Testament Paul instructs Titus to use “*sound speech that cannot be condemned...*” (Titus 2:8). James, chapter three, issues a strong warning that our speech, which is so often not *sound*, can get us into more trouble than we can successfully handle.

5. Sound Doctrine. In 1 Timothy 1:10, beginning in verse 9, Paul lists several sins, and in verse 10 he concludes by saying, “*...and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine...*” In his second letter to Timothy (4:3) Paul warns the young preacher that “*...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...*”

God made us, but He doesn’t deserve the blame for the choices we sometimes make that demonstrate the folly accompanying our failure to embrace the doctrine that can bring about spiritual vigor and strength. It is imperative that we realize that not all doctrine is “created equal”. Some is false and promotes a false sense of spiritual fitness, bringing on a likely continuing spiritual decline.

As we study the qualifications and duties of elders in the church, we are made aware by Paul that an elder must “*hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict*” (Titus 1:9). We are all responsible for knowing and practicing sound doctrine (that which promotes spirituality and is able to help us ward off worldliness), but our shepherds have the awesome responsibility of being so knowledgeable that they can appropriately aid us in this area and also divert and defeat those who might attempt to entice any of the flock to succumb to doctrine that would be detrimental to spiritual fitness.

6. Pattern of Sound Words. There is a 6th use of “*sound*” that we need to be aware of. “*Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*” (2 Timothy 1:13). Paul was telling Timothy (and us) that we are to be careful regarding both *what* is said and *how* it is said.

In Acts 7:38, Romans 3:2, and Hebrews 5:12 we read of the importance of the “*oracles*” (sayings, Scriptures) of God. We, the church, are to speak in a manner that is in keeping with the “*oracles*” of God...the Word of

God. This all means that we are to speak sound words, words that are in keeping with God's Word, the Bible, because these are the words that contribute to spiritual health and well-being.

What We Should NOT Say and What We SHOULD Say

Very likely we would all agree that it is much easier to *speak first* and *think second*. It is so easy to say things or use expressions without giving very much thought ahead of time.

Let me ask you to think seriously with me about some things that we sometimes hear Christians — members of the church — say that are NOT in keeping with the oracles of God, the inspired Word of God. If we are not careful we may find ourselves using the term “church of Christ” in a denominational way, which cannot be pleasing to the Lord.

Here are some things Christians sometimes say that need some correction:

Do Not Say

“Church of Christ preacher”

“Church of Christ doctrine”

“Come hear what the
Church of Christ teaches”

“I’m trying to convert her
to the Church of Christ”

“I am Church of Christ”

“I am a Church of Christ”

“I am a Church of Christer”

“The Church of Christ is right”

“We are Church of Christ people”

“I am trying to teach him
our position (or doctrine)”

“The Church of Christ teaches...”

Suggested Alternatives

“Gospel preacher” or
“preacher of the Gospel”

“The Gospel” or
“New Testament teaching”
“Come hear what the Bible teaches”

“I am trying to
convert her to Christ”
“I am a Christian”

“The Word of God is right”
“We are Christians”
“I am trying to teach
him the Word of God”
“The Bible teaches...”

God is perfect...God's Word is perfect...Christ is perfect...BUT THE CHURCH IS NOT PERFECT. Let's resolve to make a diligent effort to “speak as the Bible speaks” and to “call Bible things by Bible names”. In doing so, we will **speak soundly** and we will be *“holding fast the pattern of sound words”* (2 Timothy 1:13).





THE SERVANT ELDER

Jerry Bates

From the very beginning of the church, God ordained that she be led by elders and deacons. Throughout the centuries, man has perverted this divine plan of organization into several alternative systems. Nevertheless, those churches that desire to follow God's plan continue to be led by the simple plan of elders and deacons. The question we want to consider in this treatise is, "How are elders to lead the church?" I submit that most elders are very conscientious about their duties and sincerely do their best to lead and oversee their respective congregations in the way that God would have them to go. On the other hand, some lead in wrong ways or with wrong motives.

Leadership is an awesome responsibility. Some of the harshest words in the Bible are reserved for men who should have been leaders but weren't. A picture of the bad shepherd is painted in Ezekiel 34:1-6, and Isaiah described Israel's leaders as blind watchmen and dogs who do not bark (Isaiah 56:9-12). Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 23 to the scribes and Pharisees in which we find a series of woes. These Jewish leaders should have been examples of righteousness. Instead, Jesus called them hypocrites eight times in that one chapter. Clearly, that is not the model one should follow.

Some see business as the model by which an elder should lead. Elders attempt to manage the congregation like a board of directors and act as the bosses, making decisions that the rest of the congregation must

follow. They hire various staff members to do the work, and if they do not produce the desired results, replacements are found who will. However, the above model is not biblical. The dominant metaphor used in the Bible for spiritual leadership is the shepherd and his relationship to his flock. It is used more than 500 times. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and today's spiritual leaders are to imitate Christ through loving service and genuine relationships. It should not be a relationship of lords over servants, but one of love and service.

The imagery of a shepherd and sheep to describe the relationship of elders to the church implies at least three things. One, the elder must be available. Just as the shepherd spends much time with the sheep, time must be spent with the spiritual flock to develop that relationship. Secondly, the shepherd is committed to the sheep. Whatever the sheep needs, the shepherd will try to give provide it. Thus, the elder must be committed to the spiritual welfare of the flock. The elder will not be judgmental over the weaknesses of the sheep; rather, he will show great compassion over the shortcomings and weaknesses of the flock. Finally, trust is earned and built over time. The sheep trusts the shepherd, and the church must be able to trust the elders. However, this trust must be earned, and obviously, it should be there even before one becomes an elder. We trust Jesus because we know He keeps His promises; thus, an elder must be trustworthy in all aspects.

Elders are to be the examples to the flock. Some have falsely concluded that



elders have no real authority and that they only lead by example. Rather than this imagery reducing their authority, it simply describes how they do their work. Someone said, "When a person needs to assert his authority, it

usually means he has very little of it.” When an elder is the right example, others are usually glad to follow his leadership.

Their work is not merely telling others what to do. Instead, they are to show others how to live and work for God. Their work is one of mentoring, similar to how Jesus related with His disciples. Jesus said, ***“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”*** (Matthew 20:25-28). Mentors model the way that one should live. Paul said something very similar in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he wrote, ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”*** Mentors inspire hope, and they know how to point others to Jesus.

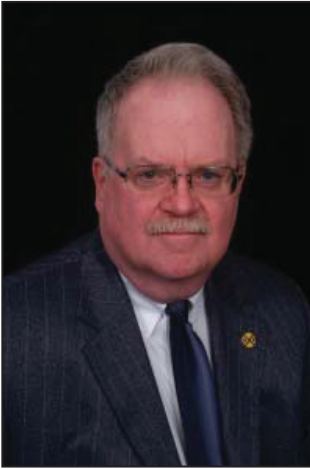
Elders should also equip others for better service to God (Ephesians 4:12). Equipping is not merely giving people jobs to do. It means to help people discover and develop their own particular talents and abilities. When each member is properly equipped and working for the Lord, the body will grow both numerically and spiritually.

One final function and possibly the most important function that we should consider is one of protection. Just as the shepherd protects the sheep from wild animals, etc., **the elders should spiritually protect the flock**. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that ***“...savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among ourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch ...”*** (Acts 20:29-31). The duty of elders is to protect the flock from false teaching, from both within and without. This requires a great deal of courage as well as knowledge and wisdom to be able to distinguish false doctrine from opinion or simply a different way of doing things.

To perform all of the above functions is an immense job and an awesome responsibility. However, there is no greater work that one can do for the Lord. ***“If a man desires the position of a bishop he desires a good work”*** (1 Timothy 3:1), and he is worthy of great honor and encouragement. 

The Church in Prophecy

Louis Rushmore



The only church of which everyone now living desperately needs to be a member is the single church about which one can read in both testaments of the Bible. Especially in the Old Testament, the Bible student can read about *the church in prophecy*. However, in the New Testament, the same truth seeker finds the fulfillment of those prophecies upon the establishment of the church that Jesus Christ died to establish and over which He alone is the Head.

Throughout the centuries preceding the commencement of Christianity, though, God's plan for mankind's redemption, and that it involved the church, remained a curious mystery (1 Peter 1:10-12). Yet, the interrelation of God's scheme for human redemption, the church and Jesus Christ is no longer hidden from earnest pupils of the Holy Scriptures since the New Testament completes divine revelation of the mind of God to mortals. What was formerly a "mystery" is now recognized as the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*and to make all see what is the fellowship of the **mystery**, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:9-11 NKJV).

If the New Testament church is the result of Old Testament prophecies, we should expect to find church prophecies in the Old Testament. God had a **plan** that involved **the church of prophecy**.

In fact, there are several hundred prophecies in the Old Testament about the church as well as about the Messiah. Obviously, we cannot on this occasion visit all of them, but we do want to notice some of them herein. Interestingly, many of these prophecies appear in chapter two of

various Bible books: Psalm 2:6,7; Isaiah 2:2,3; Daniel 2:31-45; Joel 2:28—3:2; Acts 2:16-21. Psalm 2 certainly was numbered by divine inspiration, but the balance of the Bible books were divided into chapters and verses by man to facilitate easier use and reference. Yet, it is possible that God also indirectly through providence participated in those latter chapter designations, too. These Chapter 2's and additional citations forthcoming in this article represent **samples of the church of prophecy**.

Importantly, before one can see the church of prophecy in the Old Testament, a definition of terms is necessary. Namely, often the **kingdom** of prophecy and the **church** of prophecy refer to **the same divine institution**. This becomes clear when one realizes that Jesus Christ used the words “kingdom” and “church” interchangeably in the same conversation (Matthew 16:18,19). Likewise, the apostles Paul (Colossians 1:13) and John (Revelation 1:9) also used references to the church and to the kingdom interchangeably to refer to the same divine institution. The **kingdom of prophecy** and the **church of prophecy** refer to the **same divine organization**.

Alone and without inspired New Testament commentary, some Old Testament prophecies about the church may seem ambiguous and unclear in their application. *“Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”* (Psalms 2:6,7). From Acts 13:33, one sees that the Psalm 2 passage referred to the establishment of the church through Jesus Christ. *“God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You’”* (Acts 13:33). Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 further verify the prophetic application of Psalm 2:6,7 to the New Testament church. Incidentally, Psalm 2:6,7 indicates the **where of the church of prophecy** by reference to “My holy hill of Zion,” one of the four hills atop the central mountain range on which Jerusalem was built. Together, the Old Testament passage and the New Testament counterparts also identify **the Who of the church of prophecy**—Jesus Christ.

One of the most descriptive Old Testament prophecies regarding the establishment of the New Testament church is Isaiah 2:2,3.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days [last days KJV] That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall

flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The eternal, spiritual kingdom was prophesied to be founded in the “latter” or “last days.” The physical manifestation of this kingdom or church was to appear in the mountains formerly occupied by Jacob and specifically at Zion or Jerusalem. Here we find Hebrew parallelism, where in two consecutive phrases employing different words the same declaration appears for the sake of emphasis. “Zion” and “Jerusalem” are different ways of referring to the same piece of real estate, and “law” and “word of the Lord” stand for each other in that sentence. Hence, Isaiah 2:2,3 provides for us both **the when** and **the where of the church of prophecy**.

Daniel 2:31-45 presents a bad dream that had come upon the ancient Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Unlike a bad dream that you or I might have owing to what we ate or some activity in which we immersed ourselves before retiring for the night, God caused Nebuchadnezzar to have this dream, and He provided the prophet Daniel to interpret it. The summary of the dream was that during the time of the fourth Mediterranean world kingdom from the time of the Babylonians God would bring to be the kingdom or church of prophecy. Historically, that fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire, and as one opens the New Testament, he sees the Romans ruling the nations ringing the Mediterranean Sea. During this time, Jesus was born and eventually after our Lord’s ministry the kingdom or church of prophecy was established.

Daniel 2:44 says in part, “And **in the days of these kings** the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom** which shall never be destroyed... and it shall stand forever.” Once more one discovers **the when of the church of prophecy**.

Joel 2:28—3:2 is a remarkable passage about the establishment of the church of prophecy, which the apostle Peter quoted on the birthday of the church and applied to the church of prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). Phrases of particular importance for this study include “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance” and “the Valley of Jehoshaphat.” Herein we notice **the purpose** and **the where of the church of prophecy**. Peter prefaced the quotation of Joel 2 by saying, “*this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God...*” The kingdom or church of

prophecy was to be established in “the last days,” and it was. Mankind has been living in the last days since the first century of Acts 2. Together, Joel 2 and Acts 2 announce **the when of the church of prophecy**.

The apostle Peter emphasized in his recitation of Joel 2 that ***“whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”*** (Acts 2:21). The Gospel or the New Testament speaks of two varieties of salvation—salvation for the non-Christian as he or she becomes a Christian as well as salvation for the Christian in whose life sin has entered. Summarized, Jesus Christ Himself announced the way in which one can have sins forgiven and become a child of God in the Christian Age. ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”*** (Mark 16:16). Since it is before Jesus Christ everyone must eventually appear (2 Corinthians 5:10), it behooves each soul to opt for how Jesus declared one can be saved, rather than opting for a manmade plan, which will miserably fail to derive eternal divine favor (Matthew 7:21-23). On the other hand, Christians can receive renewed salvation from sins by observing what Peter stated. ***“Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”*** (Acts 8:22; cf. 1 John 1:9). Salvation for the non-Christian and for the Christian corresponds to **the purpose of the church of prophecy**.

Another Old Testament prophecy relative to the establishment of the church of prophecy is found in Daniel 7:13,14. Words of special notice and application are ***“a kingdom...an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.”*** Unlike earthly kingdoms, this spiritual kingdom, the church of prophecy will endure “forever” (2 Samuel 7:13,14). **The duration of the church of prophecy** is taught here.

In conclusion, the church of prophecy was planned by God. There are hundreds of prophecies about the church of prophecy. Often, the words “kingdom” and “church” refer to the same divine institution. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the King of the kingdom, and He is the Head of the church. The church of prophecy was founded nearly 2,000 years ago in the mountains of Judea. The purpose of the church of prophecy is to save human souls. Finally, the church of prophecy will last forever.

Jesus Christ is coming back to retrieve the church of prophecy (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). The most crucial question that each person must ask himself or herself is, “Have I been added to the church of prophecy by Jesus Christ?” (Acts 2:47). 

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To Be Pleasing to God

Mark Phillips

Sometimes it is interesting to think about a topic in the Bible and to look in a concordance to find all the verses that contain that word. This can help you to learn about that topic from the full scope of the Bible.



I was thinking about the topic of being pleasing to God, so I took my concordance and began looking up the verses that were listed. Notice a few of the passages that talk about pleasing God.

In Galatians 1:10 the apostle Paul writes, ***“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”***

Paul, in this passage, writes about the challenge of either pleasing other people or being pleasing to God. Which is better? Many people will attempt to be pleasing to men, and in their attempt to be pleasing to

men they will not be pleasing to God. Paul, in dealing with some of the problems faced by the churches in Galatia, wants them to know that he is not concerned about being pleasing to man, but rather Paul’s concern is to be pleasing to God. Ask yourself, “What is my priority? Do I desire to be pleasing to man, or do I desire to please God?”

To the church at Thessalonica, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5, ***“but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we***

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never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness.” In these verses Paul is speaking of being entrusted with the Gospel of Christ, and as such, we are not to speak as pleasing man, but rather, to please God. Paul wants his readers to understand that he is speaking the truth of God, and as such, he is not concerned about flattering people. He is not concerned about gaining a financial advantage, but his concern is to be pleasing to God. Ask yourself these questions: “What is my main concern? Do I want to be pleasing to man or God? What is my main concern?”

Another way in which we are to be pleasing God is to live a morally pure life. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:1ff, *“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”*

We live in an age of moral relativity, where each person has his or her own moral standard. Many people do not believe that the moral standard they live by will have an effect upon their relationship with God and upon where they will spend eternity. We need to understand that God’s Word does not change. God’s standard does not change. This can be illustrated by the fact that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, does not change. This is seen in Hebrews 13:8, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

We need to understand that just as Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, God’s Word and God’s standard do not change, no matter what our society may say. 

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God Is In Control!

Ronald D. Bryant

God is in control. He is bringing to pass that which is in keeping with His will and His purpose.

The law of sowing and reaping is viewed as an inexorable law. That law is stated emphatically in Galatians 6:7. That law is illustrated repeatedly in Scripture. It can be observed in life. Yet, there is more than an inexorable law at work. The Sovereign of the universe is the power behind the laws that are operative in the material world and those that are operative in the spiritual realm. When the seed produces after its kind in the material world, it is fulfilling its purpose as designed by the God of heaven. In the material world, in the seedtime and harvest, all is working as intended and as provided by the God of heaven.

The same is true on a different level in the realm of the spirit. In the spiritual realm, one encounters not only the Sovereign Lord, but man. It is mankind that bears the very image of God and possesses the very breath of God. Additionally, man is able to

choose what he will do. He is able to choose, but he is not sovereign. He can act, but is not able to overrule the consequence of his actions. When men reap the consequences of their actions — when righteousness produces its benefits, that is but an illustration of the fact that God is in control. As discomfiting as it may be to admit, it is still true: when sin produces its consequences — consequences predetermined and ordered by God — those consequences state loudly that God is still in control. ***“God is not mocked”*** (lit. ‘outwitted’, ‘treated with contempt’ *Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon*, p. 531). Man can be contemptuous, and can contemptuously think that he has outwitted God, but in doing so he pursues an impossible agenda. God is in control and cannot be outwitted.

What is presently happening in our world, the decline of morality, the increase of crime, the growth of evil, is all the consequence of indifference toward the good and the holy, of disregard for sacred vows

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and covenants, of the abandonment of holy relationships and principles. To borrow a figure of speech, we, the people of this age, have ***“sown the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind”***. Yet, it is to be insisted that the consequences (the growth of evil, the decay of morals, the systematic destruction of society) are themselves a loud declaration that God is still in charge, and is loosing into our communities, our world, the exact and exacting product of the seed we have sown.

God still allows us to choose what course we will follow. He still calls us to righteousness and longs for us to know firsthand its benefits. He is in control and is ready and able to bestow these benefits upon all who choose to embrace righteousness and live it. He is able to bless, for He is still in control. If we choose evil, He is still in control, and He will allow us to experience the consequence of that which we choose.

He is not only in control, He is also calling us to abandon those actions and purposes that are destructive to us. He calls all of us away from sin and its consequences. It is to be argued that He even allows us

to experience the consequences of unrighteousness, seeking to drive us away from that course. He is in control and is willing to cleanse and make whole again all those who come to Him abandoning evil and yielding in obedience to Christ. He is in control and longs to bestow blessings (Ephesians 1:3ff.)

Blessings come from a loving Sovereign who is willing and able to bestow blessing. Destruction and ruin and other consequences of evil come not from mere inexorable laws. They come from a loving Sovereign who longs for us to be wise, penitent, and obedient, but He will allow us to know the bitter fruit of that evil we have loosed in our lives. God is wise and all-knowing. God is love, ever seeking to turn us from sin. 

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**God is not only in control,
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to abandon those actions
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and its consequences.**

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THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

Charles Cash

Found in a 12th century church building in Hampshire, England is this inscription.

YOU ENTER THIS CHURCH, NOT AS A STRANGER, BUT AS A GUEST OF GOD. COME, THEN, WITH JOY IN YOUR HEART AND THANKS UPON YOUR LIPS, OFFERING GOD YOUR LOVE AND SERVICE. BE GRATEFUL TO THE STRONG AND LOYAL MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO IN THE NAME OF GOD BUILDED THIS PLACE OF WORSHIP, AND TO ALL WHO HAVE BEAUTIFIED IT AND HALLOWED IT WITH THEIR PRAYERS AND PRAISES. MAY ALL WHO LOVE THIS HOME OF FAITH FIND THE INSPIRATION OF THIER LABOR AND REJOICE IN THE POWER AND LOVE OF GOD, THAT HIS BLESSING MAY REST ON YOU BOTH IN YOUR GOING OUT AND YOUR COMING IN.

Grant it, this inscription was originally written about the church building, but it will fittingly apply to the “assembly”, the church. The church is the people, brought together in community by their surrender, commitment, and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, who enjoy His blessings to the fullest. In his book, *Reversed Thunder*, Eugene Patterson wrote. “The life of faith... in the biblical narratives is highly personal but never merely individual; always there is a family, a tribe, a nation... church. God’s love and salvation are revealed and experienced in the congregation of the people ‘*who know the festal shout*’ (Psalm 89:15), not ‘*in the garden, alone.*’”

In keeping with this theme please notice these inspired words of Paul: ***“And God placed all things under His [Christ’s] feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way”*** (Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ

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is not only ***“the head of the body, the church”*** (Colossians 1:18), having authority as the Head, but He is also the ***“head over everything for the church”***. In other words, He is the Head of everything that has anything to do with the church, His people. Again, the church is ***“the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way”***. Briefly, this ***“fullness”*** includes:

First, the ***“fullness”*** is what Christ represents. ***“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity [Godhead] lives in bodily form”*** (Colossians 2:9). The fullness of all the designs, purposes, and goals for man were wrapped up in Christ. Othenheimer, the atomic scientist, once said, “When you have an idea to get across, wrap it up in a man and send the man.” That’s exactly what God did, ***“according to His divine purpose”***. Phillips called Christ “God’s celestial rescue party.”

Second, the ***“fullness”*** of what God supplies for His people is through Christ. ***“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ”*** (Ephesians 1:3). God’s plan is ***“that you may be filled to all the measure of the fullness of God”*** (Ephesians 3:19).

Third, the ***“fullness”*** of Christ’s presence is in our lives. Our Lord’s biography closes with these words, ***“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”*** (Matthew 28:20). The Hebrews writer assures us, ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”*** (Hebrews 13:8). Back up three verses for God’s promise: ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”*** (Verse 5). Isn’t God great?

Paul sums up our life in the church this way. ***“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in [through] the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen”*** (Ephesians 3:20,21). In living our lives for God, we give glory to Him through the church, where we enjoy the fullness of Christ. ✝

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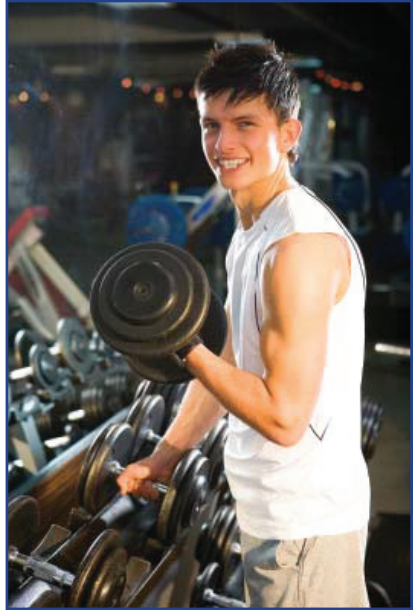
The Muscle System

David Everson

Within the body of man and most animals God has created a group of organs that causes a uniquely animal characteristic, that of movement. The more than 600 muscles in one's body allow, among other things, graceful movements, movement of food, and even cause our passage into this physical world at birth. Let's examine how movement is made possible by the muscles of our bodies.

There are three distinct types of muscles: the *skeletal* muscles, the *cardiac* muscle, and *smooth* muscles. Each of these has been designed with a very specific type of makeup that allows them to function in very different ways. The overall functions of the muscle system include movement, heat production, stabilization of body position, and protection.

The skeletal muscles are also called *voluntary* or *striated* muscle. This refers to how they are controlled and how they look under microscopic examination. Basically, they attach to bones and cause the skeletal system to move. They are controlled by direct signals from the brain when we want to move in a certain way. They contain two very distinct types of proteins—one thick and one thin. This arrangement causes a striped appearance, giving it the name *striated* muscle. These muscles can produce some tremendous forces, as in the case of “hysterical strength” where humans have done superhuman feats. This is probably possible because the muscle filaments



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all function at the same time instead of alternating on and off.

The **smooth** muscles are also called **involuntary** or **visceral** muscles. This refers again to how they are controlled and look. These muscles are found in organs such as the digestive system, eyes, urinary system, and many other places where we have muscles that are controlled by our autonomic nervous system. They operate as they are needed and are controlled by nerve impulses from the organs to the brain, and they can be turned on and off. Our food is moved through the digestive system without our thinking about it.

The **cardiac** muscle is that muscle which is found only in the heart. These muscles are self-exciting, as they have their own electrical impulse system. Our heart must pump blood every minute, hour, and day of our lives for us to remain alive, and yet, it still finds time to rest for about half of our lives.

The muscle system is indeed a wonderfully coordinated system controlled by the brain. It takes the signals from the central nervous system that allows us to get all of the muscles moving together to make coordinated movement possible. As we watch a baby learning to walk, we are seeing the brain and muscles learning to communicate back and forth. It requires much trial and error before everything is “fine-tuned” just right and the baby takes off walking.

As we use our muscles, they increase in size as more fibers are added to the muscle. This process is called hypertrophy. When we do not use the muscle, it will remove muscle fibers and decrease in size or atrophy. This allows us not to carry around muscles that we are not going to need for the rest of our lives. As we increase our physical activity, we will begin to grow the needed muscle for our activity. The inspired apostle Paul indicated that physically we would grow when we made an effort, just like we would in our spiritual lives. Sometimes athletes say, “No pain, no gain.” This reflects that we must physically move our muscles in order to get stronger.

Our bodies are indeed **“the temple of God”**. We should make every effort to keep that temple in the best physical condition so that it can be used by God for service to Him. 

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INVISIBLE EVIDENCES WE CANNOT DENY

Betty Burton Choate

Christians are constantly being challenged with the accusation, “You live by a blind faith.” Is our faith blind, built on nothing but hope?

No, our every expectation is built on God’s word, and we have — ***buried within each of us as individuals*** — undeniable evidence **of God, of our own souls, and of eternity!** Some would challenge further, “Those are invisible things you can’t prove. No one has ever seen God. You can’t see your soul. No one comes back from the dead as proof of immortality.”

Let me show you the evidence. Humans have lived through six thousand years of history. There are countless ethnic groups, scattered all over this huge world, since the fall of the Tower of Babel. Among more than seven billion people currently living, there are all kinds of religious beliefs, superstitions, myths, and cultures. Humanity is diverse and messed up in lots of ways. It’s an age-old story that hasn’t changed.

But think about this: Genesis 1:1 declares, “***In the beginning, God...***” Genesis 1:26 says, “***Let Us make man in our image...***” These are very revealing statements. *How* are humans patterned after God’s likeness? In body? No, because God is Spirit. The account of creation says that after God had formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He “***... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being***” (Genesis 2:7). This statement declares that the part that gives life to the human body is **the immortal spirit** inhabiting each one of us. How do we know the soul is real and not a figment of imagination? Look at humans throughout time, history, and the world. **Universally, there is — and always has been — the expectation that the burial of the body is not the end of life!** Artifacts buried with the dead testify to the belief that the souls live on in an unseen place.

● Since not a single person has ever seen a *soul*, could such a universal belief have persisted through the ages if it were not a fact that **God placed in our consciousness a conviction of immortality?**

● Look again at humanity. Always, humans have been worshipful

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beings. Where there was knowledge of the Creator God, He has been worshiped, but when ignorance and myths crowd out truth, “gods” are invented, molded from clay, or perhaps carved in stone. Why? Again, no one has ever seen God, so why would *all* humans feel compelled to believe in and worship a Being they have not seen? Obviously, **there is a great empty space in the soul of each individual, crying out to be filled with acceptance and adoration of its Creator.** There is no other explanation for this historical and universal compulsion to worship.

● What else is common to all humans? **A knowledge of right and wrong.** In spite of the influence of evil that sometimes has turned things upside-down, it is universally accepted that it is wrong to kill, to steal, to lie, and to live immorally. It is also lauded as “good” when people are kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving, loving, self-sacrificing, with the weaker defended by the strong. Why would humans, in general, criminalise evil and promote goodness toward each other, even to the point of self-sacrifice? Go back to Genesis 1:26, where God stated that the humans He would make would be **“in His image”**. **The blueprint for the morals and values of humanity are embedded in the human soul, writing God’s standards on each one of us.**

In the perfection of Adam’s initial existence, he had the blessing of walking and talking with God. There was no death, no sickness, nothing but utter perfection in himself, in Eve, or in the entire world around them. **Their every thought was in harmony with the attitudes and emotions of the One in Whose image they had been formed.**

But the challenge is offered, “If we are made in God’s image in these ways, then what explanation do you have for all that is wrong with humanity?”

● That answer, too, involves an undeniable but invisible being: Satan, the fallen one who, according to Ezekiel 28:12, 13, was **“the seal of perfection, the anointed one, and was in Eden the garden of God.”** But he had the dream of exalting himself above God, and so he was cast out (Isaiah 14:13,14). We are warned that he now roams the world like a roaring lion, **“seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8).

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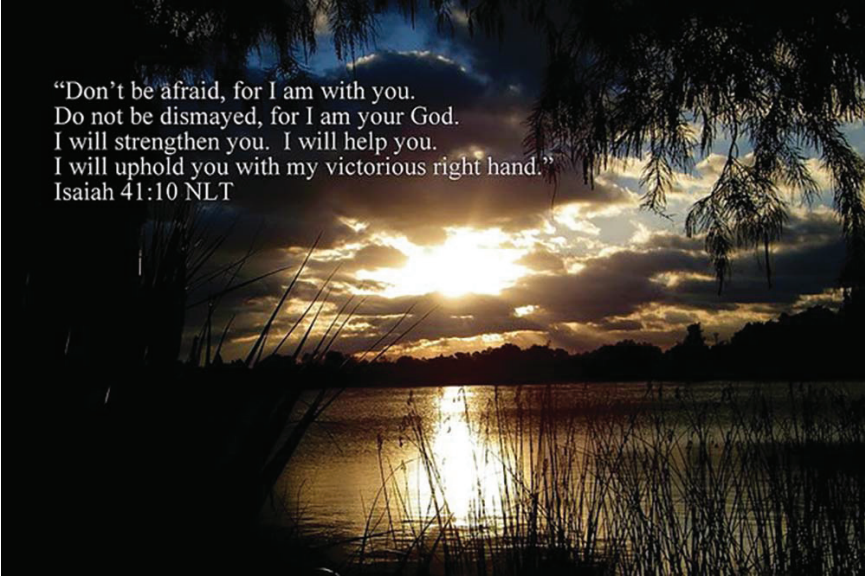
Does Satan really exist? No one has ever seen him, because he too is an invisible spirit being, but we know that he exists because of the brokenness and evil that we see all around us.

Just as that “anointed one” had the power of choice, so man was given the freedom to obey or to disobey God. He chose to disobey, and the result is a broken world in which all humans fall prey to temptation and sin. To the extent that we **allow** it, Satan’s evil replaces love, compassion, goodness — all those perfect attributes of God that were imprinted in our souls — with every opposite. The result is a war between good and evil — between God and Satan — as people violate their consciences and the laws of the land, overwriting the imprint of God in their souls.

Who will win the War? Ultimately, God wins, but in the process many souls will surrender to Satan’s onslaughts, becoming weaker and weaker in bearing the image of God until finally all that was good has been overwritten by Satan’s corruption. We see this dominant evil in unbelievers!

But if we resist, holding onto that Image within us, we will win. ✝

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, living in Winona, Mississippi and thankful to be still of use in God’s work.



“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you.
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you. I will help you.
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”
Isaiah 41:10 NLT

A Walk Through the Bible

Paul Holland

The story of the Bible, in one sentence, is: **The salvation of man though Jesus Christ to the glory of God.** That's what the whole Bible is about. We can divide the Bible history up into 15 periods, much like the face of the clock. When we understand this history, then we can see where each book of the Bible ties in with that history, where each book fits in.

ANTE-DILUVIAN PERIOD: “Ante” means “before” and “diluvian” refers to the “deluge” or the flood of Noah. So, the first period of Bible history refers to the first eight chapters of Genesis. This is the story of the “beginning,” the meaning of the name “Genesis.” It is the beginning of the universe, of man, of the family, of sin, of worship.

POST-DILUVIAN PERIOD: This period is the immediate period just after the flood of Noah. Thus, it covers from chapters 9-11. It leads up to the call of Abraham.

PATRIARCHAL PERIOD: The word “patriarch” is an old English word, based on two Greek words, that means the “rule of the father.” It refers to the period when God spoke directly to the fathers - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The word “patriarch” is a biblical word, being used 6



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times in the NT. The “patriarchal” period, in our survey, covers Genesis 11-45, and probably the book of Job.

EGYPTIAN PERIOD: The next period of Bible history picks up with Jacob going down into Egypt. It was there that the Hebrews became persecuted and enslaved by the Egyptians. They stayed in Egypt for about 200 years or so when God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. This period covers Genesis 46 - Exodus 14. Also, this was when the “Hebrews” started being referred to as the “Israelites” as a body of people, although the name was given to Jacob when he wrestled with the angel back in Genesis 32.



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At Mount Sinai, God formed this group of people into a nation and gave them a law — the Law of Moses. It was primarily to keep them monotheistic so they would not lose their faith in the one true God. So, God has created a people, and a law, to bring Jesus into the world.

WANDERINGS PERIOD:

The fifth period of Bible history is when the Israelites wander around in the wilderness for forty years. The specific occasion for that is found in Numbers 13 & 14. Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan to spy out the land. They came back to Moses and 10 out of the 12 spies

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did not believe they could take the land. So, God punished them with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. God chose 40 years because the spies had been in Canaan for 40 days. The “wanderings” period would cover the rest of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

CONQUEST PERIOD:

In order to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham to give his family some land, God led Joshua to lead the invasion of Canaan. This period is covered in the book of Joshua.

JUDGES PERIOD:

As the Israelites swarmed through the land and took possession of it, they did not drive out all of the unbelieving nations who lived there, as God had commanded them. So, these unbelieving nations caused spiritual problems for the Israelites.

“Judges” were not legal advisors as we use the term today. They were military leaders and some of them were spiritual leaders. The judges began “good:” Ehud, Gideon, and Deborah but with Jephthah, the judges started being more self-centered, culminating in Samson and civil war among the Israelite families. Samuel was the last of the judges but he also anointed the first king of Israel.

UNITED KINGDOM PERIOD:

King Saul started out good and ended badly. King David was anointed next and he would be a good king even as he committed some major sins. David’s son, King Solomon, would be the last to rule and reign over a united nation of Israel. Kings David & Solomon are dated around 1,000 B. C.

DIVIDED KINGDOM PERIOD:

King Solomon raised taxes on Israel in order to pay for his building projects. When Solomon died, his son, King Rehoboam increased those taxes, which led to the nation splitting. Ten tribes united in the north, called Israel or Ephraim (after the largest tribe), with their capital in Samaria.

Two tribes — Judah and Benjamin — remained in the south and formed their own nation of Judah. Their capital remained in Jerusalem, the city of David. Eventually, because of idolatry (not one king in the

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north is described as following the ways of God), they were defeated by the Assyrian nation in 722 B. C. and led into captivity. The Assyrians moved non-Israelites into that land and they intermarried with Israelites which produced the Samaritans.

This history is covered in 1 & 2 Kings. The prophets who preached during this period of time are: Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, and Micah.

JUDAH PERIOD:

After the northern tribes were carried into exile, the southern tribes remained alone for about 136 years before they, too, were carried into exile by another nation — Babylon. This happened in 586 B. C. We read about this in 2 Kings as well as the parallel accounts in 2 Chronicles. The prophets who preached during this period of time are: Jeremiah (Lamentations), Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.

CAPTIVITY PERIOD:

The prophet Jeremiah predicted that the Jews would stay in captivity in Babylon for 70 years. So, the next period of Bible history is the time Israel spent in captivity there in Babylon. Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel preached during this period of time.

RESTORATION PERIOD:

God promised He would bring the Jews back home at the appropriate time and that period is called the period of restoration. It happened around 520-516 B. C. under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. This period is covered by the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther and the corresponding preachers are: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The story of Esther, in particular, takes place in Persia. Persia is the country that takes over the Babylonian Empire and their leader, Cyrus, allows the Israelites to go home.

INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD:

There is a four-hundred year gap in-between the Old Testament and the New Testament. During this period of time, Persia falls to Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire and the Greek language and culture spreads throughout the Mediterranean world. But then the Greeks are conquered and dominated by the Roman Empire and this empire ushers in the Pax Romana we've heard about in

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history. The Romans create paved roads; they spread laws throughout the land that helps create peace; and they devise a very efficient postal system. All of these points help create the ideal atmosphere in which God, the Father, will send His Son into the world to die for our sins.

LIFE OF CHRIST PERIOD:

In fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament, Jesus comes into the world, to save man from his sins, to the glory of God. Jesus lived for 30-33 years. Everything was in place for His coming: the people

(Israel) were established; the law (of Moses) was given; and the land was available for their habitation (Palestine). Jesus did what the Father wanted Him to do. Then, He died on the cross for our



sins, rose from the dead for our justification, and then ascended back to the Father.

THE CHURCH/KINGDOM PERIOD:

But Jesus promised to build His church (or kingdom as it was pictured in the OT) and that church/kingdom was established by the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2. From that time until Jesus comes again, we are living in the age of the church/kingdom. There will not be another period following this one once Jesus comes again.

It is important to know Bible history so that we can see God working, have confidence in His message, and respond to Him in love and obedience. 

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HOW THE WORLD WILL END

David A. Sargent

A new report claims to offer “the first science-based list of global risks with a potentially infinite impact where in extreme cases all human life could end.” The authors of the report — led by Dennis Pamlin of the Global Challenge Foundation and Stuart Armstrong of the Future of Humanity Institute — define “infinite impact” to mean “risks capable of either causing human extinction or leading to a situation where ‘civilization collapses to a state of great suffering and does not recover.’”

According to their research, here are....

“The 12 Things Most Likely to Destroy the World”:

1. Catastrophic Climate Change.
2. Nuclear War.
3. Global Pandemic.
4. Ecological Catastrophe.
5. Global System Collapse.
6. Major Asteroid Impact.
7. Supervolcano.
8. Synthetic Biology.
9. Nanotechnology.
10. Artificial Intelligence.
11. Future Bad Governance.
12. Unknown Unknowns. *

To the inscription of “Unknown Unknowns,” God, *“who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth”* (Acts 17:24) has revealed how the world will come to an end:

“But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for FIRE, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to

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perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:7-10 NASB)

Because He has told us, we no longer need to wonder and speculate.

NOW... *“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way,” the question is: “What sort of people ought you [WE!] to be?”* (2 Peter 3:11).

God’s answer: We need to be Christians! Just as Noah and his family needed to be in the ARK to escape the coming destruction by WATER, you and I need to be IN CHRIST to escape the coming destruction by FIRE — because Christ IS God’s solution to what will lead us to “eternal destruction” (Matthew 7:13-14). *“For the wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

Because of God’s love for us, Christ died on the cross for our sins so that we might have forgiveness and receive the gift of eternal life (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7).

As Brett Petrillo has noted: “To put it simply, the world is going to be destroyed by FIRE... The specific way God will use fire to destroy the world is a mystery, but the universe will one day be burned up with fire. We know God will save those who place their **faith** and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in **repentance** (Acts 17:30-31), **confess Jesus** before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are **baptized** (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27). He will continue to cleanse those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7).

Yes, one day the world will come to an end; it will be destroyed by fire. *“But he who does the will of God abides forever”* (1 John 2:17).

Won’t YOU “do His will” and accept His offer of salvation and eternal life on His terms? 

David A. Sargent, Minister, Church of Christ at Creekwood, Mobile, Alabama, USA.

Sources: “These are the 12 things most likely to destroy the world” by Dylan Matthews, www.msn.com and “12 Things Most Likely to Destroy the World” by Brett Petrillo in Daily Bread (2/20/15), an e-mail publication of the Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, CO. See www.bearvalleycofc.com

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“...But Especially the Parchments”

Dalton Key

The aged and battle-scarred apostle Paul, confined to a dark, damp prison cell, and realizing his martyrdom as both certain and imminent, writes one last letter to his own *“son in the faith”*, Timothy. Paul asks that Timothy come *“before winter”* (2 Timothy 4:21). He also asks, *“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.”* No doubt shivering from the chill of his drafty cell, Paul asks for his coat — and also for his books. And which to Paul is most important? *“...but especially the parchments”* (2 Timothy 4:13).

Great men of God have most always been lovers of good books. I understand that brother J.W. McGarvey, renowned preacher during the early days of the Restoration Movement, felt a special kinship to his library. It is said that before leaving for his trip to the Holy Land, he went into his library and spent time with his books as if saying goodbye to old and dear friends. A good, well-stocked library is the great consulting room of wise men, and wise men feel a natural closeness to that which makes them so.

Those who have given their lives to preaching the truth should cultivate early an appetite and appreciation for good books. Brother Guy N. Woods advises the preacher to be “a man of the Book, and a diligent student of many books.” He further suggests, “The collection of books ought to be a lifelong pursuit of the active Gospel preacher...He who quits studying, quits growing mentally; and this leads to stagnation and sterility in preaching.”

Everyone who has ever been cold can understand Paul’s desire for a cloak, but only a few, themselves in love with the “embalmed minds of worthy books,” can understand Paul’s yearning for the parchments — *“especially the parchments”*. 

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THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word

Greg Tidwell

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Jesus, tempted by Satan in the wilderness, continually returned to Scripture as a weapon against the tempter’s power. Even as our Lord faced the forces of evil, we also are confronted with temptations day by day. If we want to live, we must take our Lord’s example to heart. We cannot truly live if we are centered on material things. We cannot live by bread alone. We need something more.

Our Father in heaven knows and provides for our physical needs, but as Christ instructs in Matthew 6:33, we must seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, trusting God to provide for our needs. How, then, do we seek His kingdom and His righteousness? True

life does not come from material sustenance, but from the nourishment found in God’s Word.

God has spoken. His Word provides the way of eternal life. God’s Word builds our faith, instructs our obedience, nurtures our character, and confirms our hope.

Our confidence in Scripture is inseparable from our confidence in God. In His Word we find the resources we need to live in fullness and power, conforming our lives to His revealed will. 



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Verse Search



1. What two things did Paul say all Christians should consider themselves to be? (4:1)
2. Of what did Paul say we are stewards? (4:1)
3. What is the primary requirement of a steward? (4:2)
4. Who should a steward be concerned with pleasing? (4:4-5)
5. When will we all be judged? (4:5)
6. Who will be the judge on that day? (4:4)
7. What will be revealed on that day? (4:5)
8. Where will our praise come from? (4:5)
9. Paul said that we were not to think of ourselves beyond what thing? (4:6)
10. To whom should the Corinthians look for examples? (4:6)
11. Why did Paul say we should not be boastful? (4:7)
12. How did Paul say that he and the apostles were displayed to the world? (4:9)
13. "We are _____ for Christ's sake, but you are _____ in Christ. We are _____, but you are _____." (4:10)
14. Paul listed several hardships that he had suffered until the present time. From where does true strength come? (4:11-13)

(see the back cover for answers)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. 7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you! For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

NOTE: In these verses Paul is primarily rebuking the Corinthians for their pride. He begins in verses 1-5 by reminding them of whom they were servants. They were all servants of God; therefore, they must not be concerned with judging each other, because what right did they have to judge another's servants. God will judge each of us in the last day.

Beginning in verse 6 Paul seems to be using sarcasm to get his point across. He uses several contrasts to show the distinct difference between the humble status of the apostles and the elevated status of some of the Corinthians. One can see this most clearly when one compares verses 8 and 13. The Corinthians viewed themselves as reigning as kings, while Paul said he was scum of the earth. Paul was endeavoring to clean the minds of these Corinthians who were filled with the pride of the Greco-Roman culture. To them, humility, which should be part of the Christian character, was a weakness and a fault. In contrast, to the Christian, it is a great strength.



The Biggest Tombstone in the Cemetery

Charles Box

Death and cemeteries are nothing new for any of us. Through the years our family members, fellow Christians, neighbors, and friends have died. The death of a loved one is a very painful experience. Someday, like everyone else, your physical body will die. However, physical death is not our end. When your physical body dies, your spirit does not die. Attending a funeral or a walk

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in the cemetery serves as a vivid reminder that we all will face death because of the curse brought on humanity when Adam and Eve rebelled against God (Genesis 3). Death is a reality; it is not just an imaginary proposition. Solomon wrote, ***“I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them”*** (Ecclesiastes 9:11,12). Death is coming to everyone! A while back Benjamin Faulkenberry and I were standing beside one another in a cemetery. Beside us was a very large tombstone. This must have been the biggest tombstone in the cemetery. However, I do know that having the biggest tombstone in the cemetery does not guarantee a right relationship with God.

Graves and tombstones are nothing new. On the 6th page of the little Bible that I am using this morning we read of death. The first death that is recorded in the Bible was by murder. ***“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him”*** (Genesis 4:8). From that day onward there have been graves, grave markers or tombstones of some kind, and cemeteries. Sarah was buried in the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 23:19). Rachel was buried along the way to Bethlehem. ***“Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day”*** (Genesis 35:19,20). In 2 Kings 23:17 you can visit the tomb of the young prophet who was deceived by an old prophet and later killed. The grave was marked well with some inscription. The old prophet had helped to make this grave well known. Jesus was buried by Joseph of Armathaea. He wrapped His body in a clean linen cloth, and he ***“laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed”*** (Matthew 27:57-60).

A person might have the biggest tombstone in the cemetery because he or she was loved deeply. It is a wonderful thing when family members are loved, respected, and appreciated. But, please never forget that funerals, fancy

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cemeteries, and tombstones are for the living and not for the dead. Love and honor your family members while they live so they can know and be blessed by your concern. The same principles that John used to encourage the church to love should also encourage the family to love. John wrote, ***“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”*** (1 John 3:11). Our love for family members must be shown while they are alive. Providing the biggest tombstone in the cemetery for one’s grave means nothing to them. It is impossible to go to heaven without loving our brethren (1 John 3:14,15). This same love must also be shown for your families. Having the biggest tombstone in the cemetery does not guarantee a right relationship with God, nor is it real proof of family love.

A person might have the biggest tombstone in the cemetery because family members feel guilty for having neglected him or her during his or her lifetime. Our daily actions with our family are so important if we are to demonstrate love to them. We must speak loving words to our family. Encouraging and building up our family must be at the forefront of our daily actions and words. Family love is the opposite of ***“bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking.”*** Kindness, forgiveness, and being tenderhearted must describe our relationship to our family. ***“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”*** (Ephesians 4:29-32). Having the biggest tombstone in the cemetery does not guarantee a right relationship with God, nor does it make up for our failure to love our family members.

A person might have the biggest tombstone in the cemetery, and yet the question does not have to do with the size of the tombstone, but rather the depth of that person’s relationship with God. The fact that we are the bride of Christ means that we must have a deep and an abiding relationship with Him. Christians literally become one with Jesus (John

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17:21-23). This relationship is so intimate that our lives must be lived in the image and likeness of our Lord. The Bible tells us, ***“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you”*** (James 4:8). Our relationship with the Lord demands that we keep our attention focused on God daily. ***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”*** (Isaiah 26:3). If I tell the person I am a Christian, that should describe my relationship with God. Those who are not Christians are serving Satan; those who are Christians maintain a strong relationship with the Lord. ***“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”*** (Romans 6:16). Having the biggest tombstone in the cemetery does not guarantee a right relationship with God.

Having the biggest tombstone in the cemetery has nothing to do with your salvation. You would be much better off to be buried in some unmarked grave somewhere and go to heaven than to have the biggest tombstone in the cemetery and go to hell. The only answer to the sin problem is the precious blood of Jesus. ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:8). To become a Christian, you must hear the Gospel (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ as Lord (Matthew 16:16), and be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). This is the Bible way of salvation. There is no other way to be at peace with God and man. The only ground for forgiveness is Jesus’ death! If we have not contacted the blood of Jesus, then we have no salvation. ✝



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Things Temporary, Things Permanent

Joe W. Nichols

Life on earth can be somewhat fearful when one considers being attached to that which is not permanent. The public is constantly made aware of the depletion of the ozone layer, pollution of the earth and its water supply, a possible collision with a meteorite, an alleged global warming, and sometime in the future the sun burning out. Added to these concerns is the Bible's teaching that the heavens and earth will ultimately end with divine intervention in a rather abrupt manner.

When considering the tabernacle, temple, and priesthood of the Old Testament era [the product of the Law of Moses], all was designed to pass away in time (Hebrews 12:27, 7:12). The materials of both the tabernacle and temple were subject to decay. Much of their furniture and adornment was plundered or destroyed by warring forces. All that is left today is a record of their moments of glory and an antiquated law that no longer seriously governs any segment of mankind.

When considering marriage, it is a temporary arrangement of God in providing a ***“help meet”*** for man in serving. His purpose is to ***“replenish the earth”*** (Genesis 1:28). Marriage provides a suitable setting for nourishing the offspring both physically and spiritually (Ephesians 6:4). All marriages in due time — because of death — cease, fulfilling God's plan as temporary unions (Romans 7:1,2).

When considering the human family designed by God — the family into which each person is born — it enjoys only a short tenure on the earth. In due time it disintegrates, giving way to other family units. Physical families, as evident, are not eternal. They are designed by God to serve only a temporary arrangement and purpose (Mark 12:25).

When considering the present heavens and earth, they are marked for destruction. The Bible says, ***“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up”*** (2 Peter 3:10). Sometime

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in the future the heavens and earth and all things associated with them will cease to exist.

When considering the real and consequential outcome of God's eternal purpose of creation, a beautiful picture emerges. True, the heavens and earth shall cease, but God has willed something unprecedented for those of His own possession (Malachi 3:16,17, Titus 2:14). The Patriarchs of old ***“desired a better country, that is, a heavenly”*** (Hebrews 11:16); Moses looked beyond this life, ***“unto the recompense of reward”*** (Hebrews 11:26); and Christians are exhorted, ***“Seeing that these things [heavens, earth, etc.] are thus all to be dissolved”*** to look for ***“and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God”***...and ***“according to His promise”*** look for ***“new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness”*** (2 Peter 3:11-13).

God, therefore, is offering a transition from this temporary attachment to physical and material things into spiritual things. In regards to the faithful, He is preparing that which is spiritual and eternal — that which passes not away (John 14:1-4; Hebrews 10:19-23, 12:27,28). God has designed for us:

- 1. A new birth and a new spiritual family** (John 3:3,5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,41,47; 1 Peter 2:5,9; 1 Timothy 3:15).
- 2. A new resurrected, immortal, spiritual body** (1 Corinthians 15:38-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 22:14).
- 3. A new heavenly city** (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21,22).
- 4. A new totally personal, spiritual, heavenly relationship with God, the Father; Jesus, the Son; the Spirit of Truth;** heavenly beings; and all the redeemed children of God (Revelation 21:22-27, 22:3-5).

In considering the brevity of life (Psalm 90:1-12) and our passing swiftly through this human existence, we must each decide whether we will allow ourselves to be captivated by the world and that which is only temporary, or to develop a loyalty to God and things that are permanent and eternal. Many choose to love the world and its pleasures (1 John 2:15-17) and suffer bitter consequences, casting away all hope of life eternal with

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God. What earthly, temporary blessing can compare to a new spiritual, eternal **body**, a new spiritual, eternal **family**, a new spiritual, eternal **city**, and a new spiritual, eternal **relationship with God**? Most assuredly, the wise decision would be to *“seek the things above where Christ is seated on the right hand of God”* and to set our minds on *“the things above, not on the things that are upon the earth”* (Colossians 3:1,2).

When we begin to view ourselves as *“sojourners and pilgrims”* (1 Peter 2:11) on the earth, it will be evidenced in our putting *“to death [our] members which are upon the earth”* and putting on the divine attributes of God (Colossians 3:5-15). This present earth as witnessed by all is a well-defined graveyard as tombstones line the roads and highways. This earth holds no bright future for us, but merely *“treasures that perish with the using”*. Only God, through His Son Jesus Christ and the cross, paints a desirable picture for us. In viewing such a grand panorama of spiritual and eternal things, we can, without any hesitation, earnestly and hopefully say *“heaven holds all for me”!* 

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But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:10-13 NKJV)

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Rip Van Pinkie

Mike Hinton

As I am writing this, nine months have passed since my right arm was crushed in a work accident. Although the arm will never fully recover from such a massive injury, it is still healing, and I get more use out of it almost every day now.

There was quite a bit of nerve damage, resulting in loss of feeling. Most severely affected was the ulnar nerve, which passes near the elbow and, among other things, provides sensation to the little finger. For most of the last nine months my right “pinkie” has been numb, which has been somewhat of a mixed blessing.

During that time I have been careful to examine it regularly for cuts and burns, because were the wound to become infected, I might not notice it until gangrene set in. We don’t enjoy pain, but it is our body’s early warning system against infection, and thus it is essential to our health.

Recently, my “pinkie” has been slowly waking up, and I can tell you it has been a rude awakening. As in the story of Rip Van Winkle, who slept for 20 years and awoke to a changed world, so my finger is having a bit of trouble adjusting to the physical changes brought on by the injury.

The “awakening” of a conscience that has been “slumbering” for an extended period of time may cause a similar kind of discomfort. Consciences must be trained and exercised to function properly (Hebrews 5:14, Acts 24:16). A conscience that has been cauterized by willful sin (see 1 Timothy 4:2) or one atrophied through disuse will not respond kindly to rebuke. In such cases the truth will most certainly hurt. For many, the trauma involved in reactivating a dormant conscience is just too great, and they hurry to lull it back to sleep.

However, for those who seek salvation, a functioning conscience is not optional equipment. It is an essential “early warning system” against infectious sin, and without it we cannot remain spiritually healthy for long. The pain of being “*cut to the heart*” by the bitter truth may be hard to endure, but such chastening is necessary if we wish to produce the “... *peaceable fruit of righteousness...*” (Hebrews 12:11). 

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Freedom in Christ

Vance Hutton

Are you free? We all enjoy some form of freedom. This is a wonderful blessing and privilege, and many do not have this benefit. There is a freedom, though, that we can all claim that is greater than freedom from bondage to man or country. I have in mind the freedom in Christ. Christ offers freedom (Galatians 5:1). John spoke of the Lord's freedom to us as making us free indeed (John 8:36). Think how many people do not enjoy this freedom. They are free to come and go, but still live under the dominion of sin. They serve sin. Sin reigns over them. They yield their members as instruments of sin. Sin dominates their lives. Sin has a



grip on their hearts and souls. They live with guilt therefrom. They are defiled because of sin. They have been alienated from God because of sin. They face the consequences of sin here, and eternal damnation is awaiting beyond this life. Romans 6:17,18 speaks of being made free from all of this. A person picks up a Bible and sees a promise, a price, and a plan for freedom. Notice these with me.

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The Promise for Freedom

Some of the most beautiful and comforting of all verses of the Bible have to do with the promise for freedom from sin and its dominion. Think of the promise for sins to be made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). There is the promise that sins will be cast behind the Lord's back (Isaiah 18:17). Micah spoke of the Lord casting sins into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:18,19). Jeremiah promised that the Lord would remember sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34). This has to be appealing to all because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). This promise is greater than the Old Law which remembered sins each year (Hebrews 10:1). You can be free (John 8:32). God is to be thanked for such freedom (Romans 6:17,18). Would you like to be free from the guilt and penalty of all the bad thoughts you have had, the evil words you have spoken, the evil deeds you have done, and the things you should have done that you left undone? Thank God for the promise of pardon and freedom.

The Price for Freedom

The price for freedom is never cheap. The price for this freedom was the blood of Jesus. It is only through Jesus we are freed (Galatians 5:1). He redeems us through His blood (1 Peter 1:18,19). We are made righteous by His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). He gave Himself for us to purify us (Titus 2:13,14). Deliverance is through Jesus (Galatians 1:4). This freedom is offered to all (John 3:16). Are you free?

The Plan for Freedom

Freedom is available to all (Titus 2:11,12), but most are still in bondage. There is a plan that must be followed. The Lord has laid down conditions to receive this wonderful blessing. You must listen to the Lord through His Word (Acts 3:23). You must believe (John 8:24). You must repent (Luke 13:3). You must confess Christ before men (Romans 10:10). You must be baptized (Acts 2:38). You must be faithful (Revelation 2:10).

Do you know the joys of true freedom? YOU CAN! Have you gone back into bondage after being freed? You can come back. Obey the Lord today. ✝

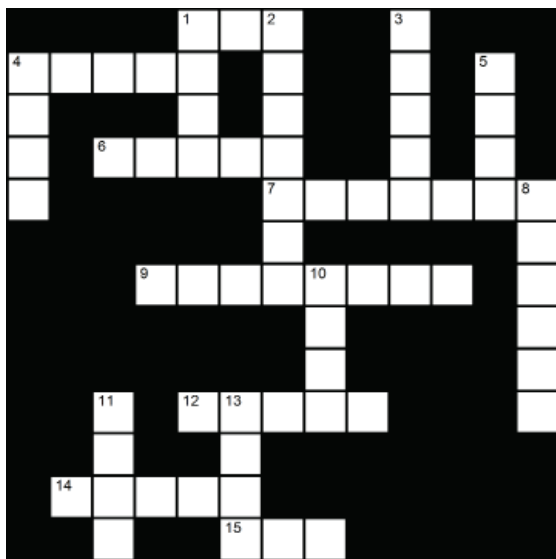
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Bible Find

Louis Rushmore

SOME BIBLE ANIMALS



Across

1. Proverbs 26:17
4. Leviticus 11:29
6. Exodus 15:1
7. Jeremiah 13:23
9. Deuteronomy 14:5
12. Matthew 8:30
14. Matthew 23:24
15. Nehemiah 4:3

Down

1. Jeremiah 14:5
2. Deuteronomy 14:5
3. Genesis 4:2
4. Leviticus 11:29
5. Proverbs 17:12
8. Genesis 22:3
10. 2 Samuel 17:10
11. Leviticus 3:12

13. Genesis 49:27

**Answers
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HOW CAN WE GET BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH?

Ken Tyler

The church of the first century as established by Christ through His apostles was not a denomination, but simply and purely the church and spiritual body of Christ upon the earth. On this most all will agree. But on the necessity of returning to that status, and on the means of doing this, few will agree. Divesting ourselves of denominationalism does not come easy. But, if we really want to be acceptable with the Lord, it is a necessity (John 17:20-22; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4; Ephesians 4:1-6; Galatians 1:6-8). Let us stop trying to justify our denominational organizations and traditions not found in the New Testament.

God does not give us the right to believe one thing and our neighbors to believe another. In that Great Day, all of us are going to be judged by the same Book, and we know what that Book is. We have no authority from God to form a denomination or invite anyone to join

such a denomination (no one has such authority, for it has not been divinely given). In fact, when we truly obey God, we are made one, not a part of any or many denominations (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38-41,47).

Let us search out the old “landmarks”. Let us humbly return; yes, let us get back to that one church which has already been established in the first century (against such, Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail, Matthew 16). There is much divesting and returning that needs to be done. Are you up to it? 

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**Let us humbly return;
yes, let us get back to
that one church which
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in the first century.**

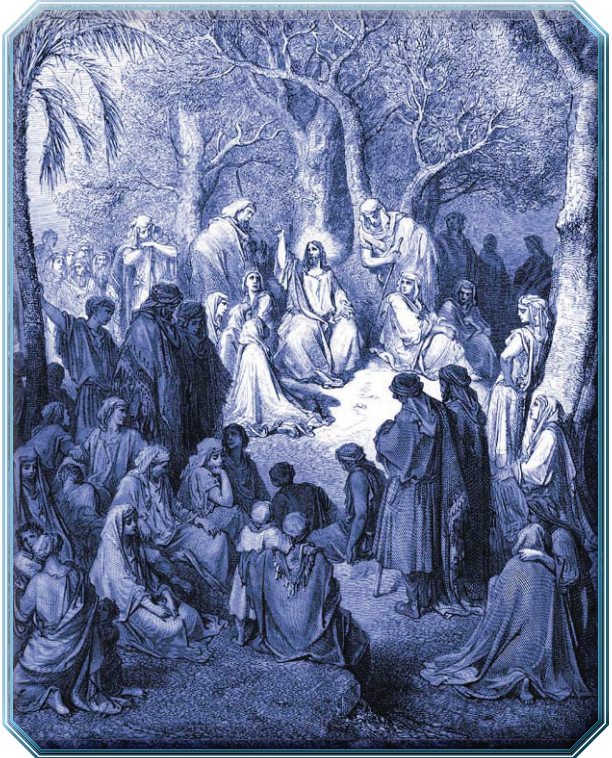
THE CHURCH

WHERE WOULD JESUS WORSHIP?

Allen Webster

If Christ returned to earth and visited our community this week, which church would He attend come Sunday? He would certainly have a variety from which to choose. There are about as many denominational variations as there are imaginations. Would He choose a sectarian body? It was His custom regularly to worship while on earth (Luke 2:42; 4:16). Where would He go if He came back to earth?

He would attend one that honored His name. Jesus demands the preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18), including the designation given local churches. All men should be concerned with glorifying Him, but today there is a lack of regard for His precious name. The name by which a religious body goes is important, because every time it is used, honor is given the one for whom it is named. Most



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church names honor some man, ordinance, or its members.

Since Christ paid for the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), it is fitting that it should honor Him by what it is called. In the New Testament, congregations were called ***“churches of Christ”*** (Romans 16:16) and similar names. One would expect Jesus to go to worship with a church that honored Him by what was on its sign of identification.

Further, Christ is honored when His followers are called “Christians”. Just Christians — not prefixed and hyphenated with some man’s name, ordinance, or manmade title. When one is asked what he is religiously, his answer will either honor or dishonor Christ. When we are called simply “Christians”, Christ receives the honor due a crucified Lord and King of kings (1 Timothy 6:15).

**Should we not attend the church Jesus
would choose if He returned Sunday?
Investigate the church of Christ!**

The Bible places considerable emphasis on the name Christian. Isaiah prophesied, ***“And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name”*** (62:2; 65:15). “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26b). ***“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”*** (Acts 4:12). As Paul taught Agrippa, he replied, ***“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”*** (Acts 26:28). How may Christ be glorified? ***“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf”*** (1 Peter 4:16). The ASV translates the last phrase, ***“...glorify God in this name”***. We glorify God by wearing the name, and only the name, of Christ. James calls it ***“the worthy name”*** (2:7). All can agree that Christ is pleased with this name. Why cannot divisive party names (1 Corinthians 1:12) be given up?

He would attend one that taught His doctrine. Of course, all churches teach *some* of His doctrine, but would He attend one that taught *some* error and

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some truth? No! He taught others to follow the apostles' teaching (Matthew 16:19; John 16:13), and only approves of those who follow *all of it* (Acts 2:42; 20:26,27). He said, ***“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”*** (Matthew 28:20). He also said, ***“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”*** (Matthew 7:21). He would not attend a service where the Bible was not being followed (1 Peter 4:11), or where members were not taught to live godly lives (Titus 2:11,12).

He would attend one that worshiped ***“in spirit and truth”*** (John 4:24). He promised to be with those who met ‘in His name’ (Matthew 18:20), which means those who worshiped by His authority (Colossians 3:17). Jesus would not attend a worship service where someone was playing a piano or where a choir (or chorus) was performing. He commanded men to sing, not play (Colossians 3:16). He commanded all to sing, not just a few (Ephesians 5:19; cf. 1:1). He condemns those who add to, subtract from, or change His Word (Revelation 22:18,19). To add these innovations is to dishonor the one who deserves praise.

He would not attend a church that emphasized entertaining men rather than worshiping God (John 4:24; Galatians 1:10). He would worship where sermons were filled with Bible quotations (2 Timothy 4:2). He would attend one that taught his salvation plan. The reason Christ came to earth was to save souls (Luke 19:10). This is why His church exists today (Mark 16:15,16). Since only the truth can make man free (John 8:32), salvation comes to those who learn and obey truth (Hebrews 5:8,9), whereupon they enter God's grace (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Jesus would not attend a church that taught salvation by faith only, because He did not teach such (Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16), nor did His inspired evangelists (James 2:24). He would not worship where baptism was ridiculed and its saving power denied (1 Peter 3:21).

Should we not attend the church Jesus would choose if He returned Sunday? Investigate the church of Christ! 

Allen Webster preaches for the church of Christ in Jacksonville, Alabama, while also serving as the Editor of *House to House, Heart to Heart*.

THE CHURCH

"I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"

Jimmy Young

The kingdom or church of our Lord is one of the most vital institutions to ever grace this great earth. It is not earthly in nature — it is heavenly in origin and mission. To be in the church is to have our citizenship in heaven (Ephesians 2:12-17) with our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). When we know what it is, what it stands for, what it means to each Christian, we would be heartless not to love it.

Take a little time and do a study of each word. By doing so, it will help each of us to truly love and appreciate the church even more.

"I LOVE THY KINGDOM, LORD." Love for the kingdom (the church) comes easily when we realize what God has done for us. There are three facts which make one grateful and able to say, "I love it because I am made in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26,27). Second, "I love it because God made me a free moral agent." I have the God-given right to choose. Third, "I love it because of what I have become." God gave me the "power" to become a child of God (John 1:12).

"I LOVE THY KINGDOM, LORD." A grateful heart will have no trouble in expressing love for the church. It has been said, "Love is the affection of the heart." Jesus said, ***"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"*** (Matthew 6:21). Some do not have a proper understanding of love. We must have knowledge that love makes demands. Take the proper time to examine and study the following demands love makes.

- Devote your **heart** to the kingdom (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 4:23).
- Put the kingdom **first** (Matthew 6:33).
- **Protect** its good name by godly living (Titus 2:11,12; 1 Timothy 4:12).
- **Obey** its laws (Matthew 7:21; John 14:15; 1 John 5:13).
- **Defend** it (Jude 3).
- **Fulfill** its cause (Matthew 28:18-20).
- **Remain faithful** to its King (Revelation 2:10).

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“I LOVE **THY KINGDOM, LORD.**” To love the Lord’s kingdom requires us to recognize it is *His*, not *ours*. Surely we love all that pertains to Him. His kingdom is composed of His people (John 3:3-5). He is King and Lord over His kingdom (Luke 19:38; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:6). Indeed, our Lord is King!

“I LOVE **THY KINGDOM, LORD.**” It is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17; Colossians 1:13). It was **purposed** (Ephesians 3:10,11), **promised** (Genesis 3:15), and **prophesied** (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44) by God. It was prepared for by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1,2). It was purchased by Christ (Acts 20:28). It was perfected by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Lastly, it was promoted by the apostles in their preaching. This is seen in the:

- Plan of Salvation
- Organization
- Name
- Mission
- Hope

I also love it because:

- Of its divine and enduring nature (Hebrews 12:28).
- Of what it has meant to me, my family, my work, etc.
- It is governed by divine law.
- It has the greatest mission (Matthew 28:18-20).
- It will never change heads, Lords, or Saviors (Acts 2:36; Hebrews 13:8). Thus, heaven is our destiny!

“I LOVE **THY KINGDOM, LORD.**” Jesus indeed is our Lord (Acts 2:36). I have accepted Him as my Lord and Savior in obeying the Gospel. By doing so, every issue of life is settled by that fact that I obeyed Him.

Brethren, just to say, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” is not enough. We must truly “love” it! We **must** demonstrate such love by faithfulness to its King and its mission. Love is always demonstrated by lifelong actions (John 14:15,21,23,24). 

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

THE CHURCH

When a Bride Forgets Her Husband

Glenn Colley

Kim and Krickitt Carpenter had been married 10 months when they were traveling on Interstate 40 in Mexico and had a wrenching automobile accident. Krickitt was injured the worst, and through great determination and the help of her husband Kim, gradually made progress back to normal life. There was, however, one big hurdle: the accident and her head injury took away the memory of the last 12 months of her life. She didn't know her husband. She would see him daily, but felt nothing for him. She called him "that guy". After exhausting every effort to make her remember, Kim finally decided that the only way to go about this was to start the courtship over again. He asked her out for a date. Then another. And another. To his delight, his plan worked. Although she didn't remember ever being married to him, he still had the same good qualities which made her fall in love with him the first time. He proposed, and she accepted. Kim and Krickitt Carpenter are now married, again.

There are several times in the New Testament in which a Christian's relationship to Christ is compared to the marriage between a husband and a wife. In Ephesians 5:21-27, Paul plainly draws comparisons between Christ's church and man's wife.

Submitting Yourselves One to Another in the Fear of God

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with

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the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul wrote, *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."* The "other man" who poses the threat of spiritual adultery is the sinful world: *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

In Matthew 22, Christians are likened to the guests in the wedding of the King's son:

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.'" (Matthew 22:1-3,10)

In Matthew 25, Christians are like virgins who have come to greet the bridegroom as He arrives with His new bride. At His arrival some are prepared and some are not. *"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them..."* (Matthew 25:1-3). Having a lamp represents being a Christian. The oil represents living faithfully to Him in good works and faithful, diligent service.

But back to the story of Kim and Krickitt, in which a bride tragically forgets her loving and devoted husband. The husband naturally tries to win her back, but all he has to offer her is what he had at the beginning. He once again offers his kind affections, his considerate spirit, and his lifelong devotions. It worked with Krickitt. She had forgotten her husband, but

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she hadn't stopped appreciating the wonderful qualities which Kim came to offer her. She fell in love with him all over again. She was won back.

When a Christian, as the bride of Christ, "forgets" Christ, the Lord tries to win her back. He offers the warm embrace of forgiveness (Luke 15:11-24). He sends a Christian family to beg her to return (Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5). But what does He have to offer? Exactly the same things He possessed and offered which won her the first time. The light of eternal truth. Forgiveness. A family of God's people. The promise of the mansions of heaven. That's it. The awesome grandeur of it is to faithful Christians always breathtaking.

But suppose a Christian walks away from Christ? Suppose he or she leaves this sweet marriage with Christ with all He has given? Suppose the bride rejects and refuses that? Then the bride will never return, for Christ has nothing more to offer! Hebrews 6:4-7 reads, ***"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."***

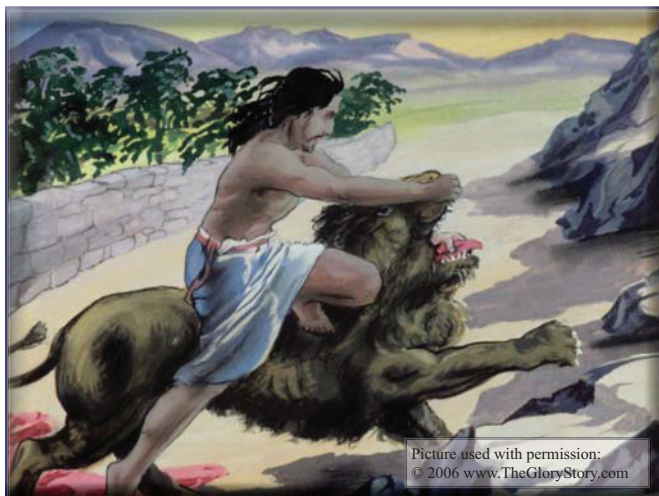
Are you that spiritual bride who has left Christ? Were you once a faithful part of His body, the church, but have now slipped away from living right? Then quickly ask yourself the question that will this very moment reveal whether or not there is hope: Does forgiveness appeal to you? What about the sweet friendship of other Christians in the family of God? What about the right to dream of eternity in the "land that is fairer than day" — heaven? If the answer is, "Yes", if these things appeal to you, then quickly take the steps to come back to Christ. Pray for forgiveness for your sins. Then rush to the next assembly of the Lord's church and let them know that you have turned around and want to be restored. You were once part of His bride, the church. He wants you back. 

Glenn Colley is the preacher for the West Huntsville church in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

Out of the Strong Came the Sweet

Michael L. King

Manoah was of the Danite family and hailed from Zorah. His wife was barren but longed to give birth to her own child. An angel of the Lord delivered the exciting news that she would give birth to a son. She was advised that this son would be subjected to the Nazarite vow *“from the womb”*. He could not cut his hair, drink any wine or strong drink, nor touch or eat any unclean thing, particularly, a dead carcass. This covenant was so critical that his mother could



neither drink strong drink nor eat anything unclean prior to the birth of the child. This young man would become known as Samson. He was raised up by God to deliver the evil Israelites from the Philistine domination

(Judges 13:1-14). However, forbidden attractions became an interference for him.

Samson was in Timnath and saw a woman who was of Philistine nationality. He persuaded his parents to go to Timnath to get her to be his wife. As they traveled, a young lion *“roared against them”* and Samson proceeded to tear it apart with his bare hands. As he was returning home,

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he took a brief side-trip to take a look at his kill once again. He discovered that the carcass was inhabited by a swarm of honey bees. He ate the fresh honey with his hands and took some to his parents, not telling them from whence it came. Samson put forth a riddle, offering garments and sheets to those who could solve it within seven days. The riddle stated, ***“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”*** It was only when his wife told the Philistine the key to the riddle that they could solve it (Judges 14:14-20).

Samson violated God’s vow that was placed upon him of being free of the unclean. When he killed the lion with his hands, he touched the unclean, a dead carcass. When he ate of the honey which came from a dead carcass, he further disobeyed God’s injunctions.

The sweet appearance of something often disguises the awful, terrible hurt and bitterness that are to follow. It is no wonder that Paul warned the Thessalonians, ***“Abstain from all appearance of evil”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:22). James confirmed this truth by declaring, ***“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed”*** (James 1:14). Note in the same context (verse 15) the progression of wrong: ***“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*** The “sweetness” of sin initially has a compelling power over the heart of an individual. ***“Lust is desire gone wrong!”*** Further, Paul warned the Romans to ***“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof”*** (Romans 6:12). In the very next verse, he forbade them to ***“yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you...”*** (verses 13-14a). James informed his readers that ***“sin brings forth death”***, but in the above passage, Paul emphasized that those who yield themselves to God are ***“alive”***.

When contending with sin, “the intentions are not nearly as dastardly as the consequences.” To illustrate the point of our discussion, let me reference a piece of Greek mythology. The legendary Sirens were supposed

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to be nymphs living on an island, luring passing sailors to destruction by the irresistible charm of their singing. Odysseus was so determined to not fall prey to them that he stuffed his companions' ears with wax and bound himself to the mast of his ship to avoid them. This was merely a *myth*, but Samson was dealing with *real* temptation. We today live in a real world with the devil and his devices, ***“as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”*** (1 Peter 5:8). What are we doing to restrain ourselves from falling prey to him?

The implication is that the Corinthians had ***“become unequally yoked with unbelievers”*** to work unrighteousness (2 Corinthians 6:14), which obviously had a diluting effect upon their spirituality. The advice he gave them is appropriate for those who would please God today. He said, ***“Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”*** (verse 17). Samson could have remained ***“separate”*** had he listened to God's instructions about purity. His birth, mission, and purpose in life were unquestionably a gift from God. God did ask for something in return — a pure life of service. The same expectation is made of us today. Children of God are to be ***“a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”*** (1 Peter 2:9). We can become and remain separate by being sanctified (separated/purified) by obedience to the truth of God's Word (John 17:17).

Our world today is “artificially sweetening” the bitterness of sin. It may momentarily have a pleasing affect, but the final result is as potent as a toxic tonic! ***“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”*** (Proverbs 14:12). We must ***“search the scriptures”*** and ***“try the spirits”*** (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 4:1) to make sure that we are not jeopardizing the covenant relationship into which we entered at birth, spiritual birth in baptism, by which we were forgiven of our trespasses and made complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10-13). 

Michael L. King preaches for the Lord's church in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Preach Jesus...

Kevin L. Moore



As we seek to fulfill the Great Commission and share the Gospel with our neighbors and the rest of the world, what is the message that we should be communicating? On multiple occasions

I have heard statements like, “Just preach Jesus.” I have also heard the corresponding sentiment, “Stop preaching the church and just tell people about Jesus!”

If one considers “the church” to be merely a manmade denominational sect, then I certainly would not want to endorse or promote such an institution either. But when I read what the Bible says about the church and think about the church and teach others about the church, I see something entirely different. The church of the New Testament is the body of Christ and the community of the saved. How can we just preach “Jesus” without including the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the body of which He is both head and Savior (Ephesian 5:23)?

When Philip “preached Christ” to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5), this included matters pertaining to the kingdom of God, the authority of Christ,

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and baptism (verses 12,13). Later, as he “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35), the teaching helped the eunuch understand that he needed to obey the Gospel by being baptized into Christ (verses 36-39). Paul simply preached **“Christ crucified”** to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2), but this obviously included baptism into Christ’s body (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13), not to mention all the other instructions he passed on to them (Acts 18:11). To teach “Jesus”, in the biblical sense, not only involves transmitting the doctrine *about* Jesus, but also the doctrine *from* Jesus, including that communicated through His inspired agents, **“the whole counsel of God”** (Acts 20:27). This is not merely “church doctrine”, it is the doctrine of Christ (John 7:16,17; 2 John 9).

As we preach “Jesus”, we must never neglect to inform people about the community of the saved to which the Lord adds all who obey the Gospel (Acts 2:37-48; cf. Hebrews 5:8,9). What is a bridegroom without a bride (Revelation 21:9)? Can there be a king without a kingdom (Colossians 1:13)? What purpose does a foundation serve when there is no building (1 Corinthians 3:9-11)? Will we sever Christ’s head from His body (Colossians 1:18)?

The church of the New Testament is the body of Christ and the community of the saved. How can we just preach “Jesus” without including the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the body of which He is both head and Savior (Ephesian 5:23)?

Jesus and His church are not mutually exclusive, and to preach one without the other is both insufficient and detrimental to the Lord’s cause. We are not in the business of persuading people to join “our” church or submit to “our” doctrine, but we must diligently teach CHRIST’S doctrine, inclusive of HIS church and the necessity of being a faithful member of it (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:4; 5:23). Congregations grow and souls are saved when this task is prayerfully and earnestly undertaken. God help us to be faithful to the task. 

Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible and missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Hender-son, TN USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Predestined

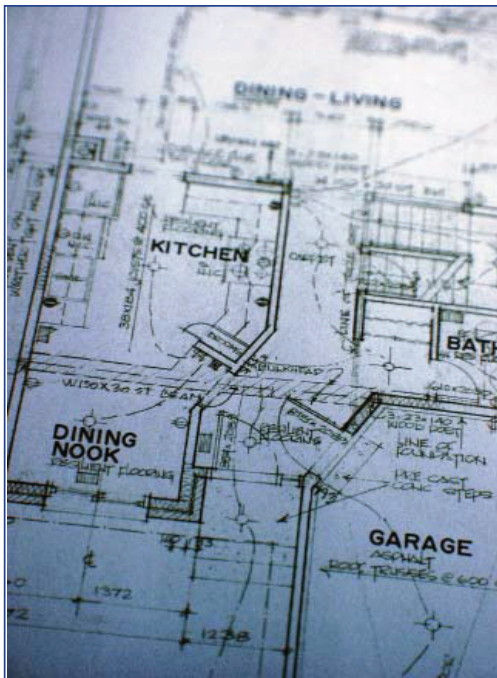
Neal Pollard

Predestination simply refers to deciding on something beforehand or determining in advance. John Calvin's erroneous ideas about it notwithstanding, predestination is a thoroughly biblical concept. The word, itself, is used a good handful of times, referring to things God determined from His mind from before eternity. It is interesting to see the things God has predestined.

The New Testament teaches *a predestined plan* (Acts 4:28).

The early church recognized this as it faced its first instance of opposition. As Christians petitioned for divine help, they acknowledged how the Father saw as part of His divine plan that Herod, Pilate, and the Romans would crucify Jesus. Reading passages like Ephesians 3:9-11, and as we look at the Bible from a historical viewpoint, we can see this plan unfold with Jesus as the hero and central figure of Scripture.

The New Testament teaches *a predestined behavior* (Romans 8:29). Christians are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. "Conformed" means to have the same or similar nature, and the point of context is that God's plan of redemption featuring His Son opened the



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door for us to also become children of God. Through Christ's redeeming work at Calvary, God looks at us as He does His only begotten Son. But, conformity is more than about form — it is about substance. Being in God's kingdom means that we have a new identity, but it also means we have a new way of thinking and acting. We will think and act like Jesus! God determined that, as part of His plan, Christians would behave differently from the unredeemed!

The New Testament teaches *a predestined message* (1 Corinthians 2:7). First Corinthians Two speaks of the process of God revealing His Word to mankind. Paul called it God's wisdom, pointing again to His eternal scheme of redemption, predestined to our glory! God's message to us involved the marvelous, thankfully intelligible, process of revealing or unlocking His mind and will through spiritual words. Scripture is the deliberate and intentional communication from heaven to earth.

The New Testament teaches *a predestined position* (Ephesians 1:5). The book of Ephesians, in exalting the church of the Christ, exalts the position of those who have accepted Him. Adoption into the family of God means access to all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). God determined, before making us from the dust of the ground, before breathing into our nostrils the breath of life, and before making us in His image, that we should be given a place in His family through Jesus! He did this, making us sinless, but knowing that we would become sinful. No wonder grace is central to Paul's writing in this epistle.

May we never allow man's distortion and false teaching of a subject to cause us to cower or avoid the truth on that subject. It is a rich and marvelous study to look at the things and people (Christians) determined by God even before time began. It elevates the way we look at ourselves and the way we look at Him! 

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.

The New Testament teaches a predestined plan, behavior, message, and position.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Quick Fix Religion

Randall Caselman

Our culture appears obsessed with quick fixes — debt consolation, overnight weight loss diets, uncontested divorce, get-rich-quick schemes, etc. But quick fixes do not solve problems; they merely treat symptoms with cosmetic results. Unfortunately, we have moved this quick fix concept into religion so that we can feel good for the moment with little or no effort. We must know that to be right with God and others takes time, energy, and effort. It takes *conversion*: ***“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”*** (Acts 3:19). Instead of conversion, we want a quick fix, faith without faithfulness, baptism without crucifixion of the old man, forgiveness without repentance, and a Savior without discipleship. Let me suggest that these concepts cannot be found in the Bible.

Conversion demands that we be changed.

Repentance is not incidental to conversion; rather, it is a must: ***“What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We die to sin; how can we live in it any longer?...For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”*** (Romans 6:1,2,6). Conversion demands death to the old life and resurrection to a new life. Later in the chapter, Paul commands us to become instruments of righteousness in God’s hands. In Romans 12 he teaches that we are to become living sacrifices. Conversion is not a quick fix to our sin problem; it is becoming a changed person!

Conversion is discipleship.

Religious quick fix advocates want a Savior, but not a Lord. Our generation shuns the idea of a Lordship Gospel. We don’t want anyone telling us how to live. But genuine conversion is walking as He walked,

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living according to His Word, and making His agenda our agenda. Christian conversion is allowing Jesus to rule over every arena of our lives. ***“We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him”*** (1 John 2:3,4). Paul writes that the grace of God ***“teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope...”*** (Titus 2:12,13). Conversion is not a quick fix; it is a discipline to follow daily.

Conversion is perseverance.

Conversion is an ongoing process: fighting the fight, running the race, finishing the course, and keeping the faith. The crown of life is not given as a quick fix, but as a reward for faithfulness. Jesus, in His divine audit of the seven churches of Asia, repeatedly used phrases like: Repent and do the things you did at first ...Be faithful unto and until death ...Remain true to My name ...I know your deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance ...Hold on to what you have until I come ...Strengthen what remains ... Endure patiently (Revelation 2 and 3). The Hebrews writer says, ***“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess”*** (Hebrews 10:23). Genuine conversion demands a life of continued faithfulness.



Summary

Religious quick fixes are little more than cosmetic Band-Aids. They give us instant relief and a momentary religious look, but they offer no lasting cure. There is no quick and easy solution to the problem of sin except genuine biblical conversion. Jesus says, ***“I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly...And when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed”*** (John 10:10). **INDEED!** 

Randall Caselman preaches for the Lord's church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses (Matthew 24:29-31; Luke 21:26-32)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.

In Matthew 24:3, the apostles asked Jesus three questions. The second one concerned "the signs of His coming". His answer is largely misapplied today, with part of it applied to the "tribulation" in the destruction of Jerusalem, and part of it to His coming at the end of the world.

Consider, in contrast, that the coming they were expecting and the one He was describing was the beginning of His reign in the church. It was then that redemption was offered to humanity. Everything contained in His answer was to take place within that generation, not at the end of time.

For more than a year Jesus had been telling the disciples that He would be killed. His trauma in the Garden lay a few hours ahead of Him, and when — between the time this conversation took place, and the beginning of the church — was the sun darkened and the powers of heaven shaken with the crucifixion of the Son of God? And when did He summon the host of heaven, as the new King? Daniel 7:13,14

Request our booklet tract, "Reconsider Matthew 24"

Open Doors

J.C. Choate

The Scriptures speak of open doors several times. Paul often mentioned them in describing opportunities that were presented to him to preach the Gospel. On the first missionary journey, it is said that the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). While in Ephesus Paul wrote, *For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries*" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

On another occasion, Paul wrote the Corinthian brethren, *"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia"* (2 Corinthians 2:12,13). The great Apostle was referring to the time that a man appeared to him in the night, asking, *"Come over to Macedonia and help us."* Paul went and preached the Gospel to Lydia and her household and to the Jailer and his household, and with their obedience to the Lord the church was established in that part of the world (Acts 16:6-34).

Paul wrote the Colossian brethren, *"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak"* (Colossians 4:2-4).

But while doors may be open to the preaching of the Gospel, on other occasions they may be closed, or may *appear* to be closed. The doors to Russia, the East European nations, many of the Arab countries, China, North Korea, and various other countries have seemed to be closed because visas could not be obtained. Back in the 60's we thought that the door to India was closed, and we were finally forced to turn to Pakistan to establish the church there. Later it was found that Canadian brethren could work in India, since Canada was a part of the Commonwealth of

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Nations. With the passing of time and changing of laws, we and others were finally allowed to work in India too. Now, it is possible to get a ten-year visa! Burma (Myanmar) once allowed only twenty-four hours, but now one-month visas are granted. These changes in rules serve to reinforce the fact that God can and does make a way for His work to be done if we are looking for the opening of the door!

Today, churches of Christ exist in most of these countries, and the work is growing. We are thankful for the perseverance of families and churches in this challenging scenario for evangelism.

Today's world houses billions of people, and God knows that it is not possible for individual Christians to teach individually, bringing the Gospel to all of those souls, so He is providing new and greater tools for Christians to use. As in the past, teaching can still be done through radio, television and printed materials, methods that continue to reach an ever growing percentage of the population. But added to those tools are cable systems, videos, Cds, DVDs, and the Internet. Through the postal systems that blanket the world materials can be hand delivered to hungry seekers who respond to offerings made through mass media. Many churches of Christ now have on-line coverage of their worship services, and they also list previous sermons and articles that can be heard or down-loaded for free anywhere in the world.

As these communication systems continue to expand, no doubt greater and even more exciting avenues will open up to us, making it possible to evangelize every nation, tribe, and tongue, in our own lifetime!

No longer can we stay at home and fall back on the excuse that we cannot go to a particular country or to some other part of the world because the door is closed. The fact is, all the doors are open to the truth, whether one works from his own home or goes physically to some distant point on the globe. The Gospel is for all of mankind, for every living soul. Our responsibility is to pick up the tools God has provide and use them to go through every open door. **The world is waiting. *What are WE waiting for?*** 

J.C. Choate passed from this life in 2008 after preaching the Gospel for almost 60 years.

How Do You Measure Up?

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

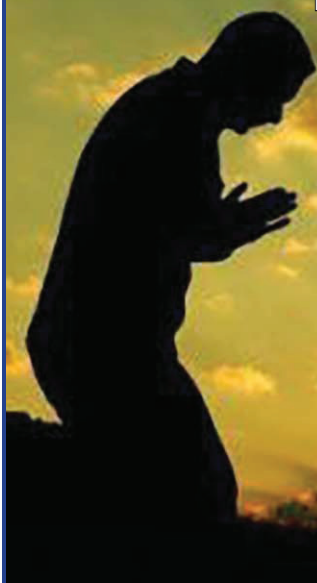
Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself....

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God....

Philippians 3:12-18; 4:6



WORSHIP



Special Commemorative Worship

Acts 20:7 says “...on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...”

Yes, we sing and pray and give and study a lesson from God’s word, but do we remember that *our purpose* in coming together is to memorialize the Lord’s death in the “breaking of bread”? How many times is this focal point reduced to two short prayers and the passing of the trays, and then we go on with the rest of the service?

The following procedure was worked out by Shane Meredith and resulted in an inspiring and deeply moving time of worship. It would be wonderful if congregations everywhere would adapt this idea and fit it to the local situation, resulting in a greater awareness of the communion we have with our Lord each time we partake of His memorial supper:

Opening prayer

Song: Why Did My Savior Come to Earth

Short lesson on the Lord’s Supper

Prayer of thanksgiving for Christ

Song: How Beautiful

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Scripture Reading: Mark 14:12-24 (the Passover Feast and the institution of the Lord's Supper)

Song: Lead Me to Calvary

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:36-46) (Jesus prays in Gethsemane)

Prayer: Focus on the Sacrifice

Song: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:22-44 (Jesus on the Cross)

Song: Jesus Paid it All

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:3-6

Song: Hallelujah, What a Savior!

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:45-54 (Jesus' Death)

Prayer: Thanksgiving for Jesus' Sacrifice

Thoughts before Communion:

(Bo Surrell)

"I was recently doing some work in my back yard that required me to use 6''X6''X8' posts. Those things were pretty heavy and by the time I got to the place where I was using them, I was sweating and completely out of breath.



"I began to think about Jesus. He had to carry something a lot heavier and a lot further than across my back yard. Close your eyes and think with me: As Jesus struggled to walk under the weight of that heavy cross, which was a difficult task in and of itself, He didn't simply have the weight of the large cross bearing down on Him to deal with. His back was ripped to pieces from the beatings He had taken earlier. His flesh was laid open, maybe to the bone in some places, and the cross was rubbing on the open wounds. As He took each tortured step, the human side of Him probably screamed, 'Lord, if it be Your will, let this cup (this burden) pass from me.' I truly believe the pain would have been more than most — if not all — humans could stand and not go into shock. But Jesus kept going, agonizing step after agonizing step.

WORSHIP

“As He neared the hill where He was to be murdered, I suspect the God side of Him said, ‘Not My will, Father, but Your will be done.’

“And as He hung on the rough wooden cross, some of His final words were, ‘Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.’

“This morning as we focus on what Jesus did for us, let us reflect first on the fact that **He left heaven:**

“Christ Jesus, ... being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-8).

“He lived perfectly, without sin:

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’ (1 Peter 2:21,22).

“He died for sinners, for you and me:

“...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.

“And in dying, He took our sins, so that we can stand before God faultless, cleansed in His blood.”

Taking of the Lord’s Supper

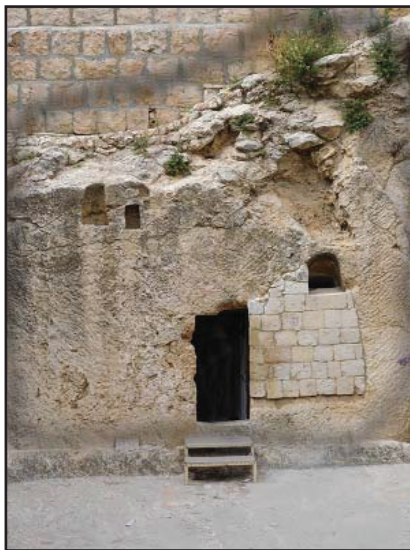
Collection with Hymn: Thank You, Lord, for Loving Me

Song: Low in the Grave He Lay

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:1-6 (The Resurrection)

Song: Because He Lives

Closing Prayer: Thankfulness that we can share with Him in the Memorial Supper.



WORSHIP

WORSHIP MUSIC

Dan R. Owen

Music has been part of human culture since the days of Jubal, one of the descendants of Cain. The beats, rhythms, and melodies of human culture have surrounded courting rituals, the activities of war, celebrations, and deaths throughout the centuries. Music is a powerful force in our culture, and it has a major place in people's lives. Culture always influences religion. How, then, does worship music fit into our desire to submit to God and our desire to offer Him pleasing sacrifices in worship?

At Mt. Sinai, God ordained instrumental music as part of the holy order of Levitical worship. God ordered a holy sanctuary constructed according to a divine pattern. He ordered holy things made to furnish that sanctuary and holy people to carry on its service. He ordered those specific people to wear specified holy garments as they carried out the worship, and He even prescribed holy substances like incense and anointing oil to be used. God was pleased when His people did exactly as He commanded. He told them to be careful to distinguish between what is holy and what is common. He warned them to distinguish between what was specified by God and what had not been specified. Among the holy things specified by God was the playing of silver trumpets over the burnt offerings and peace offerings.

Later, God revealed plans for a new, permanent sanctuary to King David. The prophets revealed God's will that special levitical singers sing and play their instruments in that holy temple as the priests carried on their worship. Men like Asaph, Heman, Jeduthan, and the sons of Korah prophesied with harps, lyres, and cymbals while the priests blew the silver trumpets and the levites sang psalms. This was all done as the priests offered up sacrifices and incense to the God of heaven as God commanded in the Law. This is the context of Psalm 150, which says, ***"Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre..."*** A wonderful example of such a worship assembly can be seen when Hezekiah gathered the leaders to worship and offer sin offerings for themselves (2 Chronicles 29:25-30).

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In the time of Zedekiah, at the end of Chronicles, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, looted and burned the Temple, and took many of the people away as captives. The Temple worship ceased. Sacrifice, incense, priestly regalia, and the instrumental music of the Levitical musicians ceased. They hung up their harps as captives. The Jews began to meet in synagogues for prayer and reading of the Scriptures, but none of the elements of Levitical worship were present. After the captivity, the Temple was rebuilt and the Levitical worship was restored. In the time of the Greek king Antiochus, the Temple was again destroyed. It was finally rebuilt by Herod the Great shortly before the time of Jesus. Only when there was a temple in Jerusalem was Levitical worship carried on.

The temple, the priests, the sacrifices, and the instruments were only shadows of what was to come in Christ. Jesus became **the sacrifice** to end all the sacrifices of animals. He became our **only High Priest**, and the Builder of a new, **spiritual temple** made up of living stones. The incense of the old temple was replaced by the **prayers of the saints**. The instruments of the temple yielded to the **spiritual singing of New Testament Christians**. Guided by the Spirit, Jesus and His apostles instituted worship that was very different from temple worship. The apostles, who urged Christians to hold to their traditions, taught Christians to sing and make melody with the instrument of the heart. Early Christians, like the Jews in the synagogues, never used instruments in their worship. The ancient church repudiated it completely until the sixth or seventh centuries, and not until the thirteenth century was it accepted in the churches generally. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and others who respected God's Word throughout church history, rejected it.

God has called us to worship Him with voices and hearts, not with instruments. If our goal in worship is submission to God and the giving of pleasing sacrifices, we will do as God commanded. I urge each one to give God our best with a variety of a cappella music. Let us rejoice, express our thanks, and praise His name in the way He has commanded, showing honor to His name. Let us not follow our own desires and be presumptuous in God's presence by attempting to worship Him with instruments of music.✝

Dan R. Owen works with the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

WORSHIP

Time to “Go to Church”!

Steve Higginbotham



“Time to go to church!” Those five words probably resonate with most of us. It may be that we’ve heard those words spoken by our parents many times on a Sunday morning, or by our spouses as we try to gather up our children and get everyone to the car.

According to the prophet Malachi, “going to church” had become a ***“weariness”*** to the children of God in his day and time (Malachi 1:13). However, that was not so with everyone. David said, ***“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’”*** (Psalm 122:1).

In 1982, I spent the summer working as a “preaching intern” for a congregation in Michigan. One of my duties while there was to go to an elderly man’s house and literally dress him so he could go to church. He suffered from severe arthritis. I had to put his shirt and pants on him, button all the buttons, tighten his belt, and tie his shoes for him. To say the least, I was out of my comfort zone. I remember thinking at the time, “If anyone had a reason to stay home, it would have been this man. God would certainly understand.” But this man would have none of it! He wasn’t about to stay home. He wanted to “go to church”, and he paid a painful price to do so.

It was while helping this man get ready for worship that summer that I learned an important truth. “Church attendance has very little to do with the distance one lives from the building or the inconveniences and difficulties we encounter. Rather, church attendance is more often than not determined by the distance between one’s heart and God.” Excuses abound where determination is lacking.

“Time to go to church!” When you hear those words, are you wearied or thankful? Give it some thought. 

Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

WORSHIP

Turning Worship into Sport and Sports into Worship

Patrick Morrison

Worship is a privilege, an opportunity to come into the very presence of God to offer Him our praise and adoration. The desire to worship should fill the heart of every child of God (Psalm 122:1) for all that He has done and will continue to do on our behalf. Sadly, many of God's own children have to come to view worship as a weariness and a bore (Malachi 1:13). Instead of actively participating in the worship of the Almighty, some are content to come into the assembly and abide as spectators. They sit idly as the prayers are led (1 Thessalonians 5:17), as songs of praise are sung to God (Hebrews 2:12; 13:15), as the Word is opened and proclaimed (2 Timothy 4:2), as the death of our Lord is commemorated in the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), as we have opportunity to give back as we have been prospered (2 Corinthians 9:7), and as souls respond in obedience and humility to the Gospel message (Acts 2:37).

Many treat worship and the church much like they do their favorite football team. It intrigues me that when a football team is doing well, "we" are winning. Even though the spectator is not involved in practice or preparation, or in the actual game-time execution of the plays, many so associate themselves with the team that they consider themselves a part of it. However, should things not go as well as these spectators would like, then it is no longer "we", but "them".

The worship spectators invest no energy or time in preparation for worship, and are only superficially involved in the actual worship itself. They may very well draw nigh with their lips, and honor the Lord with their mouths, but their hearts are far from the Almighty (Matthew 15:8). With little to no investment of themselves in worship to God, it is easy

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for the spectators to grumble and complain about what “they” are doing at church when things don’t go as one would like. Those who complain about getting nothing from the worship are usually the ones giving the least in worship to God! Worship for many has become a spectator sport.

Sadly, there are others who are turning their sports into what they worship. I have had parents tell me that their child made a commitment to their particular team when they signed up to play, and they wanted their children to honor that commitment. Parents, you made a far greater commitment to the Lord when you obeyed the Gospel (1 Timothy 6:12)! While it is important that we teach our children to honor their commitments and not to be quitters, it is also important to teach our children that there are going to be difficult decisions in life, and that doing what is right is not always the easy choice to make (Romans 12:1,2). If we as parents do not choose the Lord above all else, then we are setting our children up for heartache and spiritual failure as they grow older (Joshua 24:15; see also 1 Samuel 3:13).

I recall an elder in the Lord’s church telling me that he did not think the Lord would hold it against him if he were to miss services to attend the World Series, for, as he put it, it is a “once in a lifetime event”. We must get our eyes off the temporal and look toward the eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18)! The general rule is that as children grow up and leave home, parents start to get more serious about their spiritual lives, realizing that they are drawing closer to the end of life. As they do, they take a greater interest in the spirituality of their children, only to see that their children have chosen a life of temporal trinkets and worldly pleasure rather than a life of service to God. You see, a lot of “important” things come up that they choose over attending worship or Bible study, like jobs, vacations, recreation, etc. Parents begin to wonder “where they went wrong”. ***Might it be that while they were children, you chose softball and soccer over services, baseball over Bible class, and football over fellowship with the saints?*** Let your children play ball and enjoy it, but teach them to be serious about their Christianity. Let’s not allow it to be the other way around — serious about their ball, and playing Christianity! 

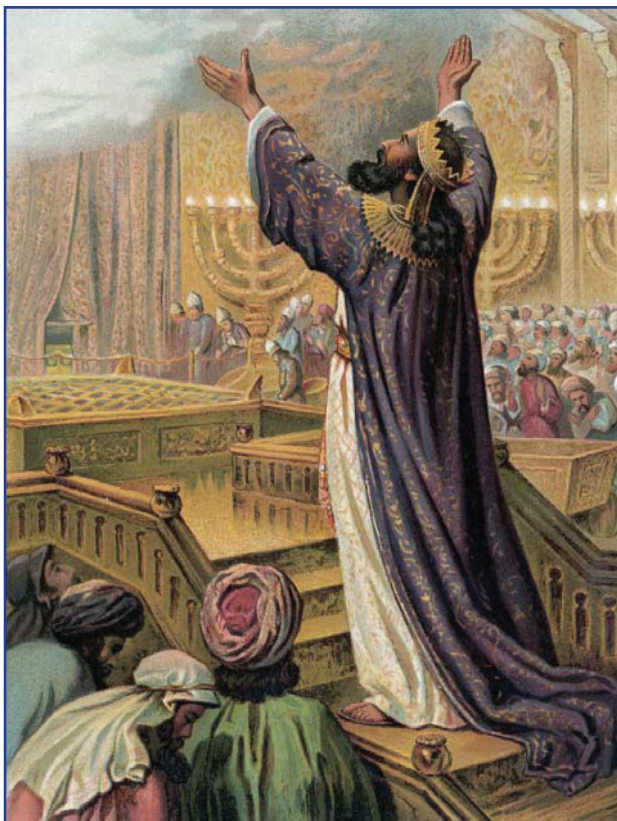
Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

Unwanted Occupants

Dan Wheeler

An interesting incident is recorded in the Book of Nehemiah. The priest in charge of the Temple storage let one of his relatives move into one of the storage rooms. Nehemiah was away at the time, and he would never have allowed this to happen. When he returned to discover this ludicrous situation, he ejected the tenant and threw out his furniture. Only then could the storeroom be used to store the offerings which paid the Levites (Nehemiah 13:4-10).

Just as Nehemiah ejected Tobiah, we must eject evil from occupying our minds. Our evil thoughts are usually attributable to the



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input our brain receives. Television, movies, and the Internet are the biggest culprits; they are visual media, which make lasting impressions. If we don't fill our minds with junk, there is little likelihood that bad thoughts will haunt us. But if they do, we exercise our conscious ability to repent, pray, and to think about something else until that thought becomes less and less of a bother. The best way to train one's conscience is by filling it with good thoughts. Thus, Paul's admonition to the brethren at Philippi is important:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8)

Jesus taught that bad things in our lives need to be replaced with good things, or else the resulting void provides an opportunity for more evil.

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I come out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation” (Matthew 12:43-45).

Like Nehemiah, we should not tolerate the invaders into our inner sanctuary. Our minds should be as pure and as holy as God required of the Old Testament Temple so that the God of peace will be with us. 

Dan Wheeler preaches for the Concord Street congregation in Orlando, Florida, USA.

Who Are the Meek?

Greely Kirkpatrick

Someone has said, “A good description of the human race is found in the Beatitudes, by turning them upside down”. At times it seems that the qualities that characterize our lives are the opposite of what Jesus said in the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:5 says, **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”** How many people in our society regard meekness as a virtue? Many seem to consider it as little more than a synonym for weakness. However, meekness is not weakness – it is strength under control. In his book entitled *New Testament Words*, William Barclay writes:

In Greek praus is used in one special sense. It is used...for a beast which has been tamed. A horse which was once wild but has become obedient to the bit and to the bridle is praus. Now herein lies the secret of the meaning of praus. There is gentleness in praus, but behind the gentleness is the strength of steel, for the supreme characteristic of the man who is praus is that he is the man who is under perfect control. It is not a spineless gentleness, a sentimental fondness, a passive quietism. It is a strength under control.

The Bible gives us some examples of meekness. Take Moses for example, a strong man, but said to be meek. Take Paul for example, another strong man, but one who was also meek. Then there is the strongest of all, Jesus, who was also the meekest of all. The question for each of us is, “Am I a meek person? Do I have my strength under God’s control? Have I surrendered my life to the will of God?”



Greely Kirkpatrick is a Gospel preacher living in Nixa, Missouri, USA.

**True meekness is
strength under God’s control.**

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

"What Does It Cost?"

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

A cartoon shows the owner of a bookshop saying to a customer, "No, I'm afraid we don't have a book on Christianity made easy." If there were such a book, it would be a bestseller. There is no "easy course" available on being a Christian.

God taught His Old Testament people the meaning of sacrifice. When Abel brought his offering, God accepted it because it was offered by faith (Hebrews 11:4). By implication, a part of what it means to offer by faith is suggested when Moses recorded that he brought ***"the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof"*** (Genesis 4:4). He gave His best!

In offering his son Isaac, Abraham demonstrated his willingness to give God his best (Genesis 22). God knew He had Abraham's total devotion.

David learned well the spirit of sacrifice. When he had sinned in arbitrarily numbering Israel, God chastised him. David was given the choice of three plagues. A plague of pestilence was sent upon the people. Ornan offered David his threshingfloor, his oxen, the wood, and the wheat for a burnt offering. A free sacrifice! But that is a contradiction! How can a sacrifice be free and easy? David said, ***"I will pay the full price. I will not take what is yours to offer the Lord without cost"*** (1 Chronicles 21:24), so he paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold.

Are we giving God leftovers? The scraps? Is our giving just tokens? The spirit of sacrifice is continued in the New Testament. God gave His best – His Son (John 3:16). Jesus gave His best — His life (Ephesians 5:23-25). Jesus taught His disciples "to deny self" and take up the cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24).

Paul urged the Roman Christians to ***"present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"*** (Romans 12:1). In these days of "accommodative, easy, and convenient religion", the spirit of sacrifice seems out of the question. It is still, however, the very heart of serving Christ. Think about it! 

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. has preached for many years and now lives in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

After 25 Years

Keith Parker

My mother's comment surprised me. Sitting at the breakfast table a few days ago, she brought up Sarah.

Sarah? Sarah Gray. Sarah Gray (along with her husband Ron) lives in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. She is a member of the Green Forest Church of Christ, the congregation where I preached after I graduated from college. This was my first church, and I was a kid-preacher.

Poplar Bluff was the birthplace of Pete. When Pete came into the world with multiple problems, the members of the congregation poured out their love for us. Sarah was one of those people. A few days after Pete's birth, she brought breakfast to our house, served it, and stayed around to help clean up. My mother happened to be there and was touched by Sarah's kindness. It's been over twenty-five years, but my mother is still talking about it. A small deed of kindness made an impression on her.

A kind deed doesn't go unnoticed. An invitation to Sunday dinner. An encouraging note. A financial gift. Changing a flat tire. Raking leaves. Mowing grass. Providing transportation to the grocery store or to church. A prayer. A visit. A bouquet of flowers. A box of candy. A smile. Who knows when you might change somebody's life? Paul put it like this in Galatians 6:9,10: ***"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."***

After 25 years, a breakfast casserole still speaks. By the way, I just called Sarah to thank her (again). 

Keith Parker works with the church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.



We Leave His Mark

Catherine Janssen

We leave His mark
On each kind deed
That we bestow
On those in need.

We leave His mark
When we show we care
For a lonely soul
Who has known despair.

We leave His mark
On each bright day
That we have chosen
To pave the way.

We sing the praises
Of Heaven above
As we spread the joys
Of hope and love.

PROVERBS 17:22



Three sisters ages 92, 94, and 96 lived in a house together.

One night the 96-year-old drew her bath water, then put her foot in and paused. She then yelled to the other sisters, “Was I getting in or out of the bath?”

The 94-year-old yelled back, “I don’t know. I’ll come up and see.” She started up the stairs and then paused. “Was I going up the stairs or down?”

The 92-year-old was sitting at the kitchen table having tea and listening to her sisters. She shook her head and said, “I sure hope I never get that forgetful,” as she knocked on her wooden table for good measure. She then yelled, “I’ll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who’s at the door.”



After a particularly inspiring worship service, a church member greeted the preacher. He said, “Preacher, that was a wonderful sermon. You should have it published.”

The preacher replied, “Actually, I’m planning to have all my sermons published posthumously.”

The church member enthusiastically said, “That’s great, and the sooner the better!”



The editor of a small town newspaper, furious over several government bills that had recently been passed, printed a scathing editorial with an enormous headline: “HALF THE LEGISLATORS ARE CROOKS.”

Many local politicians were outraged and exerted tremendous pressure on the editor to print a retraction. He finally gave in to the pressure and ran his apology with the headline: “HALF THE LEGISLATORS ARE NOT CROOKS.”



PROVERBS 17:22

A six-year-old boy surprised his mother by saying that he knew the name of Noah's wife. His mother pointed out to him, "I don't think the Bible tells us what her name was."

The boy answered very confidently, "Oh, yes it does. The Bible says Noah found Grace in the sight of the Lord."



Life can certainly get boring sometimes, so here are a couple of suggestions to help break the monotony:

(1) Sit in your parked car with sunglasses on and point a hair dryer at passing cars. See if they slow down.

(2) As you leave after visiting the zoo, start running towards the parking lot, yelling, "Run for your lives...they're loose!"



REALLY, dogs are better than kids:

- Dogs can't lie.
- Dogs never resist nap time.
- You don't need to get extra phone lines for a dog.
- Dogs don't pester you about getting a kid.
- Dogs are housebroken by the time they are 12 weeks old.
- Your dog isn't embarrassed if you sing in public.



Jim was invited to his elderly friend's home for dinner. Fred, the host, preceded every request to his wife by endearing terms, calling her Honey, My Love, Darling, Sweetheart, etc.

Jim looked at Fred and remarked, "That is really nice, Fred, that after all these years that you folks have been married, you keep calling your wife those pet names."

Fred hung his head and whispered, "To tell you the truth, I forgot her name three years ago."



Some Points to Ponder

- Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. said, "It is better to die for something than it is to live for nothing."
- Helen Keller said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do the something I can do."
- "It is more valuable to seek God's presence than to seek His presents."

Foundation Facts of Marriage

Dwight Fuqua

For our homes to be all that God would have them to be, our marriages must be all that God would have them be. In a day when marriages are crumbling and relationships are mere shells of what God intended, we would do well to reexamine what God says about marriage. What is the purpose of marriage?

One purpose of marriage is companionship. After the creation of man God said, *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him”* (Genesis 2:18). God made the woman, brought her to the man, and it was declared, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife”* (Genesis 2:24).

A second purpose of marriage is reproduction. God blessed the union of the man and woman and said, *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28). The Bible tells us that *“Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain”* (Genesis 4:1).

The third purpose of marriage is sexual fulfillment. God created them *“male and female”* (Genesis 1:27). God recognized all that He created, including human sexuality, as being *“good”* (Genesis 1:31). Husband and wife become *“one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). They *“were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”* (Genesis 2:25).

These foundation facts from Genesis are reinforced throughout the Bible. Both Testaments, Old and New, are filled with examples of godly couples who joined hands and hearts in serving the Lord. Peter stressed that Christian husbands and wives are to be *“heirs together of the grace of life”* (1 Peter 3:7). Paul encouraged younger women to *“marry and bear children”* (1 Timothy 5:14). David recognized that children are a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3). To avoid immorality, the husband and wife are to give their bodies to each other (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Song of Solomon portrays the beauty of marital love.

The Master said, *“Have you not read that He who made them at the*

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6). ✚

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

Is Your Home for Sale?

Arlis D. Richardson

Recently while I was driving home from church services I noted a sign stating, “Home for Sale”. It reminded me of an event some years ago.

A preacher friend told the following story. “I overheard the following and it made me very proud. My family and I had just moved into a new work, and we were busy getting settled. A new neighbor’s son was talking to my son. He asked, ‘Why don’t you people have a home?’ My son stated, ‘Well, we’ve got a home. Daddy just hasn’t found a place to put it yet! We’re just looking around for the right place to put our home.’”

Can you, dear reader, make such a statement? Do you truly have a home as God would have it, although your family isn’t settled in one place? Some 70 times the Bible mentions “home”. Several other passages set forth the relationship that should prevail in a home that God desires. Typical is Colossians 3:17-23, which enjoins wives to be submissive unto their husbands, children to be obedient to parents, husbands to love their wives and not be bitter against them, and fathers to not provoke their children to anger. ***“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”*** (Colossians 3:17).

Whether the family has a permanent dwelling or not, it can still have such a home. It all depends on attitude, and that attitude must be centered on God. Unfortunately, far too many families do not have such a home even though perhaps having a settled dwelling place. Yet, the faithful members of the Christian home have every assurance ***“knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ”*** (Colossians 3:24). I am fully aware that the family who listed the home for sale didn’t fully realize what that sign could be implying. I pray that they only meant that the house was for sale. **I truly hope that they will keep the home, even if they succeed in selling the dwelling.** ✚

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

A Suitable Helper

Susie Frederick

On the sixth day of this world's existence, God created man. Later that same day, He created woman; ***“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable [suitable] to him’... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man”*** (Genesis 2:18,21,22). God knew, from the very creation of the world,



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that a man would need a helper. God created woman to fill man's need. How can we women fill the needs of our husbands today?

First of all, a woman should be in subjection to her own husband — because man was created first, and the first sin was committed by woman (see 1 Timothy 2:11-14; Genesis 3:16). The command to be in subjection is not given with the purpose of making a woman's life miserable, as we learn in Ephesians 5:22,23. Here we are told that a husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church — even to the point of dying for her. Husbands should care for their wives the way they care for their own bodies. ***“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband”*** (verse 33). This is a beautiful relationship.

Secondly, a wife should make her home as pleasant as possible. The apostle Paul told Timothy, ***“Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully”*** (1 Timothy 5:14). We can make the home a pleasant place to be by keeping it reasonably neat and clean, by training our children to be kind and courteous, and by displaying a Christian attitude in every situation. We will also be a benefit to our husbands if we are hospitable. We should be willing to share the things with which God has blessed us. By doing this, we may help our Christian husbands to become qualified to serve as leaders in the Lord's church (1 Timothy 3:2).

Thirdly, there is a special way a wife may help her husband if he is not a Christian. If you are in subjection to your husband, you may win him to Christ by your Christian manner of living. ***“Wives, likewise, be in submission to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives”*** (1 Peter 3:1). Being a good example can be much more convincing than mere words.

Let us, as wives, strive to fulfill the purpose for which woman was created. Let us in every way be suitable helpers for our husbands. 

Susie Frederick and her husband Royce Frederick have been involved in mission work in India for many years. They live in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

Standing Alone

Jason Zuehlke



Have you ever thought about how easy a target you are when you stand alone? If we stand by ourselves then we are exposed to everything around us. The wind can blow us over, our adversaries can run us over, the loneliness can make us waiver. 1 Peter 5:8 says ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”***

Our adversary seeks out the weak, or lonely, to devour. If we stand alone we make easy prey for the lion to devour. So how can we become stronger? What can we do to be able to strengthen ourselves so the lion doesn't see us as easy prey?

If we look at this task, it can be a large one when we consider *all things* that Christ has given to those who would follow him. Don't be scared away because there will be work to be done; instead get ready for the comfort of eternal life in Heaven with God and Christ! So how can we strengthen ourselves so we can stand up to the Devil in this life? Paul gives Timothy a big piece of information in 2 Timothy 2:15 ***“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”***

But, even if we do all of these things, we are still standing alone. We have Christ on our side, but how easy is it for us to waiver in our faith? For myself, I have found the answer to this question very disturbing. When we stand alone, we stand exposed to all that is around us and we can find ourselves looking away from the prize even if we don't mean to. So how can we find additional strength? Genesis 2:18 ***“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet***

HEY YOU KIDS

for him.” God has already answered this question for us. He has a design that we find a companion so we will not be alone!

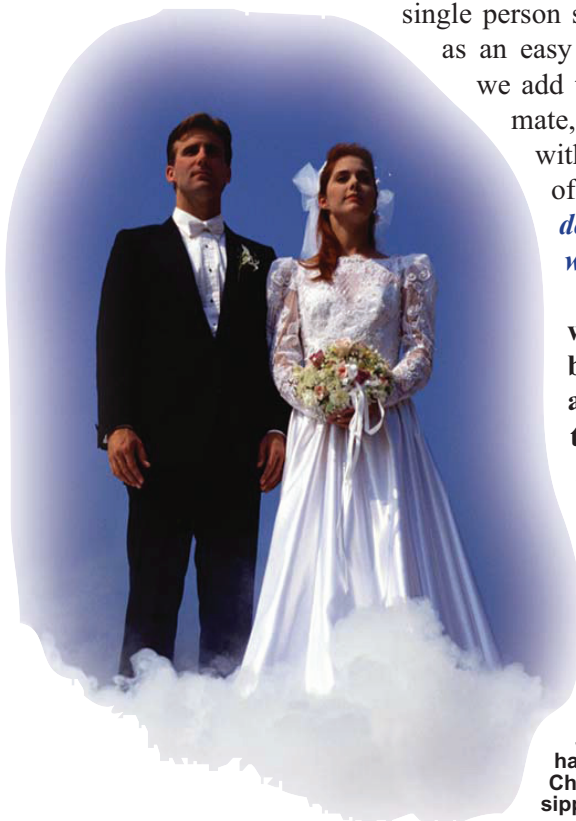
We must be careful in choosing this companion. If we choose one who is following Satan, then our companion will not help us stand strong and focus on our journey to Heaven. If we choose a companion that is also a Christian, we now have two Christians standing together and helping each other. If you stand by yourself, how long can you stand against temptations? If you stand with a fellow Christian, the question changes to how long can you support each other against temptations?

Remember the opening verse? A lion will see a single person standing by himself/herself as an easy opportunity. However, if we add to ourselves a worthy help mate, we can both stand together with the strength and comfort of Philippians 4:13, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

I am thankful for those who have helped me in becoming a Christian. I am especially thankful to those who help strengthen me by keeping me encouraged to stay on the path to Heaven and out of Satan’s temptations. And I am thankful for my new Christian mate!

Just Married!!! ✝

Jason Zuehlke and Becky have begun a new life together in Christ, living in Greenville, Mississippi, USA.



Advice for New Christians

Jonathan Exum

I remember when I became a Christian. I was only sixteen years old. I had a rough time in middle and high school. I was a bad boy in those years. I always caused trouble, and was the centerpiece of trouble. I was popular with the cool kids, but not with God. I remember coming home from school one day, and my grandmother asked me, “Are you going to church this Sunday?” I, ignorantly, said no and went to my room. Later on in high school I started to realize that something was not right in my life. I came home early one day because of something that was bothering me. It wasn’t physical, but rather spiritual.

I finally asked my grandmother for help, and she gave me a copy of **“Into the Abundant Life”**. I read it within a month, and on the day of September 13, 2013 I obeyed the Gospel. I didn’t know much about how hard it is to live the Christian life. I was new at it. I started studying and asking questions, and eventually I started having a more active role in the church. I served on the table, I read scripture, I led prayer, I led singing, and finally started preaching. Now I am trying hard to be a minister of the Gospel.

My advice to new Christians is to never give up. Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:9 that ***“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*** God never gives up on us, and we should never give up on Him. God is patient with us as Peter mentions in 2 Peter 3:15. He tells us that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. God is patient. As we live the Christian life, we must be patient and trust in God.

I would also tell new Christians that they should study God’s Word often. The only way to fight against our enemies is with Scripture. When Jesus was tempted by Satan, he replied all three times with ***“It is written.”*** Our defense against temptation is Scripture. In Hebrews 4:12-14, the Bible says, ***“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of***

HEY YOU KIDS

both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”

God’s word defeats all evil. When we think that we cannot win, we need to take it to God.

My last word of advice would be to not be ashamed to stand up for Jesus. Romans 1:16 says *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”* In this age, we could be facing persecution soon. We need to stand up for Jesus. We need to stand up for the truth. Don’t be ashamed of what is true and righteous. If we die by standing up, we will still win in the end. Never give up on God. He never gives up on you. ✝

Jonathan Exum works with the Adel church of Christ in Adel, Georgia.

Meditation Moments

(Philippians 4:8)

Del Brantley

In Ezekiel 14:23 we read, *“And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it.”* says the Lord God. It’s the underlined portion of the verse we should pause and reflect upon. God doesn’t do anything without there being a cause for it. How many times as a child did I hear my mother ask, “Why did you do that?” only to respond, “I don’t know!” This is not true with God. Even before He said, **“Let there be light”**, God had purposed in His plan to save me through His Son and His church. [Please read Ephesians 1:3-14 then Ephesians 3:9-11]

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, who gave His life that I may have eternal life by being added to His church!” From reading Ephesians 1:3, the phrase “in Christ” is mentioned, as well as in many other scriptures, but have you ever asked someone the question, **“How do you get into Christ?”**



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

TRUTH or CONSEQUENCES

1. O Lord, are not Your eyes on the _____? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive _____. They have made their faces harder than _____: they have refused to return. Jeremiah 5:3
2. Thus says the Lord: I will return to _____, and dwell in the midst of _____. Jerusalem shall be called the City of _____, the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain. Zechariah 8:3
3. For which I was appointed a preacher and an _____ — I am speaking the _____ in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the _____ in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:7
4. This is he who come by water and _____ — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the _____ who bears witness, because the Spirit is _____. 1 John 5:6
5. But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct _____ in the house of God, which is the _____ of the living God, the pillar and ground of the _____. 1 Timothy 3:15
6. Who will render to each one according to his _____: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and _____; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the _____, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath. Romans 2:6-8



Answers:

1. Truth, correction, rock
2. Zion, Jerusalem, truth
3. Apostle, truth, Gentiles
4. Blood, spirit, truth
5. Yourself, church, truth
6. Deeds, immortality, truth

"THE DUE ORDER"

Maxie B. Boren

Most Bible readers remember the incident involving Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant. Because Uzzah put his hand to the ark, God struck him dead (2 Samuel 6:6,7). On the surface, this appears to be very stern punishment for what seemed to be a well-intentioned gesture, but it takes on special significance with a little research.

We learn that the tribe of Levi was to carry the ark (Deuteronomy 10:8), more precisely, the family of Kohath of the Levites (Numbers 3:30,31). They were to carry the ark only after the sons of Aaron had properly covered it, and God cautioned them not to touch the ark, warning of death to any who did (Numbers 4:15). The ark was to be carried by staves in the rings on both sides of the ark (Exodus 25:14,15).



Reading the contexts of 2 Samuel 6:1-7 and 1 Chronicles 15:1-15, we find that not only had David and his men transported the ark in a manner other than the appointed way, but by persons other than those God had designated. They placed the ark on a new cart, instead of carrying it by the staves, and persons other than the Levites were transporting it. They had

TEXTUAL STUDIES

ignored God's *due order*! They thought God's ordinance was unnecessary.

After the initial shock of God's decisive judgment had subsided, and David took time to reflect on the matter, he said, "*None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God...*" (1 Chronicles 15:2). In verse 13, David gave explanation of God's anger upon them by saying, "*We sought him not after the due order.*" Complete attention was then given to doing God's will, and verse 15 tells us that afterward, "*the Levites bore the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord.*"

Everything went fine when they decided to do what God had told them to do in the first place. And so it is today. "*Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it*" (Luke 11:28). But people get into serious trouble when they take God's Word lightly. No man has the right to supplant God's directives with his own opinions or desires! To do so is to be headed for trouble!

The plea we make to do things God's way is not outmoded! It is still the right way! We must seek God after "*the due order*", and people need to be warned that to do otherwise is to act in vain (Matthew 7:21; 15:9). We please God by obeying Him!

We must never allow truth to be sacrificed on the altar of compromise for any reason. We cannot afford to forget that there is a "*due order*" revealed to us on the pages of God's Book. It must not be taken lightly. To do so cost Uzzah his life, but it could cost us our souls! "*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope*" (Romans 15:4).✝

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

We must never allow truth to be sacrificed on the altar of compromise for any reason. We cannot afford to forget that there is a "*due order*" revealed to us on the pages of God's Book.



Scavenger Hunt

through Acts

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. How many Jews were baptized on the day the church began?
2. What did Peter, John and the rest of the apostles pray for after the Jewish rulers instructed them to stop preaching about Jesus?
3. Why did God strike Ananias and Sapphira dead?
4. Who was eaten by worms?
5. From which city did Paul and Barnabas depart to begin their missionary journeys?
6. In what city did Paul find an altar "to the unknown god"?
7. How many men from Ephesus were wrongly baptized into John's baptism?
8. Where can one read the three accounts of Paul's conversion?
9. Which evangelist had seven daughters "who prophesied"?
10. The conversions of five individuals are provided in detail and the conversions of two other named individuals briefly are given. Name them.

NEITHER IN THE PAST NOR SINCE

John Gipson

Poor Moses! He was on the spot. God was calling him to do something he didn't really feel qualified to do. I can see him squirming as he said, ***"O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue"*** (Exodus 4:10). In essence, "I'm not the man you want."

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God could have given Moses an eloquent tongue and answered Moses' excuse, but He didn't! Instead, God sent Moses back to Egypt with his weaknesses.

The apostle Paul felt there was a limitation in his life, and he asked God to remove it. As strange as it might seem, God told the apostle Paul, ***"My power is made perfect in weakness."*** Upon hearing that, the apostle responded, ***"I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong"*** (2 Corinthians 12:9,10). If Paul could have pointed to his remarkable physical resources, the power of God in his life would not be obvious.

It may be that I share something with Moses. A clear Christian duty is set before me, but I feel that if God really expects me to do it, He would grant me special abilities — but He doesn't. I am still me. God does not need to overcome my inadequacies before He can use me. The truth is that God's power is manifested in weakness!

To be full of self-confidence is to be empty of the power of God. To quote the apostle Paul again, ***"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us"*** (2 Corinthians 4:7). 

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

BIBLE CHARACTERS

DANIEL

Ardron Hinton

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the fine foods of the king nor with the wine which he drank...” (Daniel 1:8)

There were some foods that those who lived under the Law of Moses, as Daniel did, were not allowed to eat. Certain meats were not allowed, for example. However, the word used in our text means any special food. It was not simply that Daniel did not wish to eat the forbidden foods or drink the wine. What he was really trying to avoid was the way of living of the king. These rulers did as Solomon said he had done — lived according to their own desires (see Ecclesiastes 2:10). Daniel knew that living a life that was centered in fulfilling fleshly desires and appetites would lead away from God. Paul described such people in Philippians 3:19. Like Daniel, Christian people must avoid this trap.

The key word is ***“purposed”***. Daniel determined in his heart (resolved or made up his mind) that he was not going to be shaped by the sinful world around him. We see how strong his determination was by the fact that he would even risk life itself to keep from being changed into a person of this world. Many simply do whatever those around are doing. If others drink, they drink. If others are lovers of this world, they love its sinful pleasures with them. Paul gave the standard for us in Romans 12:1,2; 1 Corinthians 6:14-18; and 2 Timothy 2:21,22; 3:1-5. It is never easy to be a Daniel.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1,2).✝

Ardron Hinton (1929-2015) was a devout proclaimer of the Gospel and lived in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.

What Do You Think of Christ?

Charles R. Rose

We often read Matthew 22:36-40 where Jesus speaks of the two greatest commandments of the law, namely loving God with our whole being and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. This arose in answer to a question asked by one



of the Pharisees tempting Him. The Master then in turn asked them a question: *“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them saying, What do you think about the Christ, whose Son is He?”* (Matthew 22:41,42).

In reading the New Testament, we find our Lord interacting with many different entities, and all had their opinion of who Christ was. It is also interesting to note that the only way the Pharisees could convict Jesus of blasphemy was by unscrupulous people who lied in their testimonies (Mark 14:57,58). Let us note the thoughts of those who were honest in their estimation of Christ.

- **ANGELS:** In Luke’s account of the virgin birth, we hear the angels declare to certain shepherds, *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).
- **GOD THE FATHER:** When Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized by John, He came up out of the water *“...and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him. And a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:16-17).

BIBLE QUESTIONS

- **JOHN THE BAPTIST:** John recognized the deity of Jesus and said to his disciples, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world”* (John 1:29).
- **PETER:** When Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was, Peter confessed, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16).
- **DEMONS:** In His awesome power Jesus healed all manner of diseases and cast evil spirits out of those possessed by such, *“And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God...”* (Luke 4:41).
- **HIS BETRAYER:** Following Jesus’ arrest, Judas saw what was taking place and said, *“I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood”* (Matthew 27:4).
- **PILATE:** When Jesus was brought to the governor he took Him to Herod who also examined Him. The conclusion was, *“I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man... No, nor yet Herod...”* (Luke 23:14,15).
- **PILATE’S WIFE:** Having a bad dream concerning Jesus convinced her that He was a just man (Matthew 27:19).
- **THE CENTURION:** Having witnessed the crucifixion of the Christ, and having seen the earthquake and other things that were done, he confessed, *“Truly this was the Son of God”* (Matthew 27:54).
- **THOMAS:** Having doubted when told of the Lord’s appearance before his fellow apostles, Thomas was given opportunity to touch the nail-scarred hands and thrust his hand into the pierced side of the Christ. His reaction was to exclaim, *“My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:28).

How many witnesses are needed to convince us of the truth? Friends, enemies, and those who tried to stand neutral all had to face the true facts surrounding this man called Jesus of Nazareth.

While reading this article the same question is being asked of you as was asked of the Pharisees: *“What do you think of Christ? Whose Son is He?”* 

Charles R. Rose preaches for the Lord’s church in Lincoln, Missouri, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

A Pair of Questions for Consideration

Dennis Gulledge

1. “Was there forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament? If not, how could Enoch have been taken into heaven?”

The Bible says, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”* (Romans 3:23-25). Paul used a word for **“remission”** (verse 25) that is not the typical word for “remission” in the New Testament. This is the only time it is used in the New Testament, and it does not mean “forgiveness of,” literally, the “sending away of sins”. It means, “the passing over” of sins. For this reason the revisers rendered it “passing over”, that is, “the passing over of the sins done aforetime” (Romans 3:25 ASV). Therefore, there was not absolute forgiveness of sins under the former dispensations. See Hebrews 9:15; 10:4.

As to Enoch, the Bible nowhere says that he was taken into heaven. The Bible only says that *“he was not; for God took him”* (Genesis 5:24), and *“by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death...”* (Hebrews 11:5).

Many religious questions nearly answer themselves when one notices what “the Bible says...” and makes “a careful reading of the passage”.

2.

“I am puzzled by Luke 22:35-38. Why did Jesus order His disciples to buy two swords if they were not permitted to use them?”

A careful reading of the passage will show that Jesus did not order

BIBLE QUESTIONS

His disciples to buy two swords. Two swords are mentioned in verse 37 where the disciples said, ***“here are two swords”***, and they could have been already present in the upper room hanging on the wall for all we know.

What Jesus did was to point out a change in circumstances. That is, when He sent the disciples out on what we call “the limited commission” in Matthew 10, He did not permit them to take money or supplies, but they were to rely on God’s providential care. Now, however, when He sends them out after His resurrection things will be different. They will need protection, even if it means selling a garment and buying a sword (verse 36). Jesus did not order His apostles to buy a sword, but urged them to exercise common sense in labors.

Where we have problems with this passage is in relation to statements like, ***“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight...”*** (John 18:36). Jesus did not permit the disciples to effect a jihad in defense of the kingdom, but nowhere did He forbid His disciples to defend themselves. 



Dennis Gullede preaches for the church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

Discernment

Hebrews 5:14

Mark N. Posey

Introduction:

The Christians to which the Epistle of Hebrews was written were in danger of leaving the Lord and returning to their former life of practicing Judaism. Hebrews is basically a book that exhorts discouraged Christians to continue on strong with Jesus in light of the complete superiority of who He is and what He has done for us. They are encouraged to ***“go on unto perfection [maturity]”*** (6:1). This instruction was given to those that had become ***“dull of hearing”*** (5:11) and were in danger of drifting away from the Lord (2:1). The author exposes their dullness of hearing and failure to mature (5:11-12); he also diagnoses their spiritual condition: babes in Christ; according to the time they had been followers of Jesus they should have been much more mature than they were.

Their diet of ***“milk”*** should have been a diet of ***“meat”***. In the original language, the sense of ***“for he is a babe”*** is “for he has become a babe”. There is nothing more delightful than



a true babe in Jesus. But there is nothing more irritating and depressing than someone who should be mature, but who has become a babe!

CHARTS & OUTLINES

These Christians demonstrated immaturity by both their lack of discernment between good and evil and in their contemplation of giving up Jesus. Therefore, it can be said that all five human senses have their spiritual counterparts. Consider how discernment and exercise relate to our senses:

1. **We have a spiritual sense of taste:** *“If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious”* (1 Peter 2:3). *“Taste and see that the Lord is good”* (Psalm 34:8).
2. **We have a spiritual sense of hearing:** *“Hear and your soul shall live”* (Isaiah 55:3). *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7).
3. **We have a spiritual sense of sight:** *“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”* (Psalm 119:18). *“The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened”* (Ephesians 1:18).
4. **We have a spiritual sense of smell:** *“He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11:3). *“I am full, having received from... you, a sweet-smelling aroma”* (Philippians 4:18). Cf. 2 Corinthians 2:12-17.
5. **We have a spiritual sense of touch or feeling:** *“Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord”* (2 Kings 22:19). *“The hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness”* (Ephesians 4:18,19).

Conclusion:

Mature Christians are marked by their discernment and by their unshakable commitment. The ability to discern is a critical measure of spiritual maturity. Babies are weak in discernment and will accept any kind of spiritual food. However, through the exercise of our spiritual senses (trained by practice and habit), our discernment between good and evil will produce maturity. 

Mark N. Posey preaches for the Austinville church of Christ in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

“Pilgrims of Hope”

Luke 24:13-36

Bobby Dockery

Introduction:

- A. On the evening of the resurrection, we find two disciples of Jesus trudging home in sorrow and disappointment.
- B. They *“had hoped”* (24:21) that Christ was the Redeemer of Israel, but now it seemed the cause was lost and their hope misplaced. The fire of their devotion was extinguished.
- C. Then Jesus came and everything changed!
- D. Luke’s account of the meeting between Jesus and His two disciples is a beautiful, moving story with tremendous spiritual implications.

Body:

I. Hope Renounced (vv. 17-24)

- A. The two disciples had left Jerusalem before the women’s story of the empty tomb had been completely investigated.
- B. They were going home from a funeral.
- C. They had once seen in Jesus a vision of hope. Now that was all gone. Their hopes were buried — lost in the past.

II. Hope Reconsidered (vv. 25-27)

- A. It was at this moment that Jesus began traveling with them, *“but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him”* (v. 16).
- B. Partially this was due to divine intervention, but part of the problem may also have been in their own hearts.
- C. Jesus took them to the Scriptures to show that the cross was not a defeat of truth, but a pledge of victory!

III. Hope Rekindled (vv. 28-32)

- A. Hope is impossible without an encounter with Jesus!
- B. It was not just that their hope was rekindled, but that they met the

CHARTS & OUTLINES

embodiment of their hope! *Note where they encountered Him:*

1. In the **Scriptures**; in the Word of God (24:17; cf. John 5:39)
2. In the **Supper**; in breaking bread with Him (Matthew 26:29; 1 Corinthians 11:29).
3. In the **Saints**; in the assembly and lives of God's people (24:36-41; Matthew 18:20).

IV. Hope Revealed (vv. 33-36)

- A. Hope shows! It will make itself visible (v. 33).
- B. They hurried back to Jerusalem to share their hope with others. They could not keep the good news to themselves.
- C. These pilgrims began their journey with hope dead and finished it with hope alive.

Conclusion:

- A. Merely knowing about the resurrection will not fill your heart with hope. 

Bobby Dockery is a writer and a preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA, and he has been heavily involved in mission work for many years.



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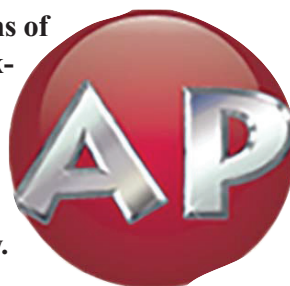


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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from Page36-37)

1. Servants and stewards
2. Mysteries of God
3. Faithful
4. God as his master
5. When the Lord comes
6. The Lord
7. The hidden things of darkness and the counsels of the hearts
8. God
9. What is written
10. Paul and Apollos
11. Because we have nothing that we have not received from God
12. Spectacles
13. Weak, strong, distinguished, dishonored
14. Understanding our weakness and Christ's sufficiency (see also 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 4:11-13)

Bible Find (from page 48)



Scavenger Hunt (page 98)

Answers:

1. 3000 2:41
2. for boldness to speak the Word of God 4:1-31
3. for lying to God 5:1-11
4. Herod 12:20-24
5. Antioch 13:1-3
6. Athens 17:16-34
7. twelve 19:1-7
8. 9:1-19; 22:1-16; 26:12-20
9. Philip 21:8-9
10. Simon 8:13; Ethiopian treasurer 8:26-40; Saul/Paul 9:1-19; Cornelius 10:11; Lydia 16:11-15; Jailer 16:25-34; Crispus 18:8

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

We Worship Thee

Chorus: We Worship Thee, we worship Thee,
Our God of praise and majesty,
We humbly come on bended knee,
Lord of Hosts, to worship Thee.

*Beginning chorus,
but not repeated
after the verses.*

Hear us, Father, hear our cry,
With broken hearts we come;
Forgive the sins that stain our souls
And let us kneel before Your throne.

You gave us life, You gave us hope,
You washed us in His blood;
You gave the light to show the way —
The treasure of Your Word.

You trusted us to wear His name,
That name that knew no sin;
We cringe for every blot we've made,
For souls misled, we did not win.

You trusted us — these human hands —
Oh, God, how can it be? —
That all the work You've ever done
You've trusted now, at last, to me?

Oh God, I come with aching heart,
Forgive me when I fail;
Help me to bring Your Words of life
To souls now on the road to hell.

Chorus: I worship Thee, I worship Thee,
My God of praise and majesty;
I humbly come on bended knee,
Lord of Hosts, to worship Thee.

*Ending chorus, sung
very softly*