

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



The Lord's church is growing in many places on the continent of AFRICA!
To God be the glory!



Many mothers, maybe mine, have asked a child, “Did you hear me?” The question is often followed by an amazing answer that indicates the child heard every word. Mothers are thus frustrated, knowing the child heard their words but did not act upon them.

God’s Word is able to save the soul and should be received with humble submission. God seemingly has the same frustrations as some mothers, since people hear the Word without doing anything, making hearing the Word of God an act of futility. Our Lord’s half-brother wrote, “***But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves***” (James 1:21-22). Guy N. Woods said the verb tense of the word “***doers***” denotes a continuous action.

The same action is seen in Paul’s description of some of those whom Christ will judge worthy of vengeance. That group will not keep on obeying the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). We are deceived when we think all that we have to do is hear the truth. **Hearing must produce a faith that acts.** Such faith is produced by hearing God’s Word, as well as believing He exists and will reward those who diligently seek Him (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6).

James used a parable (James 1:23-25) to illustrate the point of verse 22. A person who looks in a mirror to check his appearance but goes away without correcting the problems he sees is like the one who hears but does nothing. The other character in the parable “***looks,***” which Woods says means “to stoop and look, to gaze intently.” This man stands in stark contrast to the one who only glanced in the mirror and did nothing about the things he saw amiss. The one worthy of commendation carefully examines himself, intending to correct every flaw.

Each of us needs to set our sights on really hearing what God says. We can accomplish our purpose by carefully reading God’s Word to fully understand it. We, then, can demonstrate our hearing by doing what Scripture tells us to do.✝

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Costs: \$4.00 for single issues; \$15.00 for four issues; \$25.00 for eight issues. Bundle rates available. Please make checks payable to World Evangelism.

Submit articles to Louis Rushmore at editor@gospelgazette.com.

Please send subscriptions and address changes to World Evangelism at the address below. Please include both old and new addresses for address changes.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL is published by churches of Christ as a non-profit effort. Write to us at **World Evangelism, P.O. Box 72, Winona, Mississippi, 38967, USA. Phone: 662-283-1192; Email address: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org**

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

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Because Jesus Said So!

Louis Rushmore

Introduction

Jesus Christ has all authority everywhere, all of the time – period! End of story! *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’”* (Matthew 28:18 NKJV). God the Father bestowed that authority on the Christ (Matthew 11:27; John 3:35), and He will retain that authority until the end of time when He returns it to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Jesus Christ delegated authority to His apostles (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 3:3), and the Holy Spirit empowered them (Acts 2:1-4) and additional divinely inspired penmen (2 Peter 1:21). However, for the theme of this article, we will neither allude to them nor to the holy epistles they penned. People who cherish **red-letter editions of the New Testament** and revere the words of Jesus Christ over the rest of Scripture fail to realize that even the Word that our Lord conveyed to His disciples came from God the Father (John 17:8; 14:10; 17:14). Nevertheless, we will forego appealing to any but the words of Jesus Christ to accommodate persons having affection for red-letter New Testaments, as well as regarding the theme – **“Because Jesus Said So!”**

Salvation

Nothing on this earth is more important than the salvation of souls! This material world and everything in it is temporary and will not endure eternally.

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? (2 Peter 3:10-12)

Not even our earthly bodies will survive as they are once this material existence is no longer a reality.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)

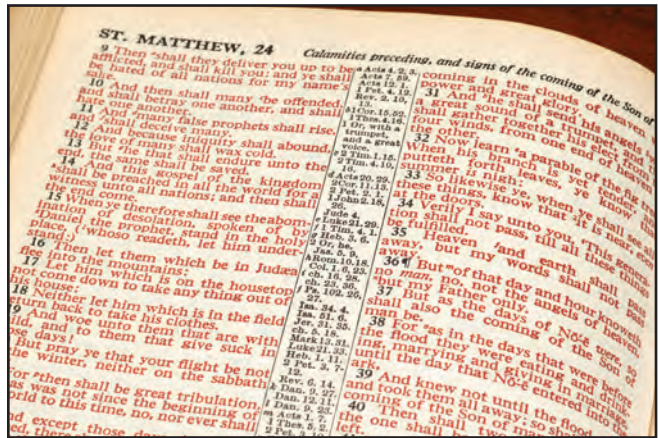
Humans are dual beings – each possessing a body and a spirit. Though the tangible, material world around us appears to be the most important consideration, this world and even our bodies are temporary. Our spirits or souls within our bodies (James 2:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7), though, will endure and be fitted with immortal bodies, as we have seen already. Therefore, the preparation of one’s soul – **salvation** – is much more important than obtaining possessions and worldly wealth.

Jesus spoke about activities that involve the saving or the salvation of souls. **Belief or faith in Him as the Son of God (Romans 1:4; 2 Corinthians 1:19) – the Savior (Titus 1:4; 1 John 4:14) – is the natural, logical and essential beginning of the road to salvation.** “*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*” (John 8:24). The source of that belief must be the Word of God rather than human creeds, etc. (Romans 10:17; Matthew 15:9).

Jesus, likewise, affirmed the necessity of **repentance** to be saved. “*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). In addition, Jesus stated the importance of **confessing** or acknowledging

that He is the Christ and Savior. *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32-33).

Mankind is not deterred on the road to salvation by hearing the Word of God, believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God, our Redeemer and Savior. Neither repentance,



though a challenge for anyone, nor confessing before others one’s confidence that Jesus is the Son of God prove to be significant obstacles on the road to salvation. **Baptism** – immersion in water for the remission of sins (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12) – is the point at which most people conscious of their need for baptism balk. Nevertheless, **Jesus Christ clearly taught the relationship of baptism to salvation. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”** (Mark 16:16).

Why is **belief** that Jesus is the Son of God necessary? **Because Jesus said so!** Why is **repentance** of one’s sins necessary? **Because Jesus said so!** Why is **confessing** or professing that Jesus is the Christ necessary? **Because Jesus said so!** Why is **Christian baptism** necessary? **Because Jesus said so! Period! End of story!**

Christian Living

The fundamental component underlying Christian living is the home. Vital to the home is the honorable institution of marriage (Hebrews 13:4), populated with children (Genesis 1:28; 9:1; 1 Timothy 2:15). Without offspring, one’s family line, specifically, will end, and generally and more widespread, society will falter. Jesus spoke authoritatively about marriage

and divorce. “*And I [Jesus] say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery*” (Matthew 19:9). Jesus taught that, ideally, marriage is between one man and one woman for life and that there is only one or a single exception.

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the 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)

Why is marriage between one man and one woman? **Because Jesus said so!** Why is marriage intended to be permanent? **Because Jesus said so!** Why is there only one reason for divorce with permission to marry another eligible person? **Because Jesus said so! Period! End of story!**

Because Jesus Said So!

Though the apostle Paul enumerated in several of his writings various sins that the children of God need to avoid (Romans 1:29-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:9-10), Jesus Christ also listed the same sins and others. “*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*” (Revelation 21:8). Why are murderers and fornicators classified alike and traveling toward hell? **Because Jesus said so!** Why are idolaters and “*all liars*” grouped together and on the road to hell? **Because Jesus said so!** Christian living requires its practitioners to “*abstain from every form [kind, type, category] of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:22) **because Jesus said so! Period! End of story!**

Christian Service

True Christianity is not merely a membership without responsibilities (James 2:17). Jesus Christ declared the chief obligation of disciples of Christ is to preach and teach the Gospel to everyone everywhere. “*And He said*

to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mark 16:15; c.f., Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Why should each Christian share the Gospel with non-Christians? **Because Jesus said so!**

There are additional acts of service beyond sharing the Gospel that Jesus calls upon Christians to do. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). Why must Christians perform an array of good works? **Because Jesus said so!**

Christian Worship

Jesus Christ expects His disciples to partake of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) or Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). *“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’*” (1 Corinthians 11:24-25; c.f., Luke 22:19-20). Furthermore, Jesus Christ fellowships with Christians during the Lord’s Supper. *“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom [the “church,” Matthew 16:18-19]”* (Matthew 26:29). Why does Christian worship include observance of the Lord’s Supper? **Because Jesus said so!**

Another aspect of Christian worship is giving a freewill offering (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 9:7). Jesus also taught about giving. *“...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’*” (Acts 20:35). Why does Christian worship include giving? **Because Jesus said so!**

Aside from the words of Jesus, the New Testament reveals that there are five activities of Christian worship, in no particular order. They are giving and the Lord’s Supper, already noted, plus teaching or preaching (Acts 20:7), singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) and prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15). However, our emphasis throughout this article pertains to what Jesus said.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ informed His apostles that the third person of the Godhead

– the Holy Spirit – would provide them with the very words they would preach – the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (John 14:26).

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-15)

The Gospel is the *“Gospel of Christ”* (Romans 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 9:12, 18; 2 Corinthians 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2) – the good news belonging to or attributable to Jesus Christ. Hence, not only the words of Jesus Christ – highlighted in red-letter editions of the New Testament – but all of the words in the New Testament are the product of divine inspiration – attributable to the Godhead but verbally communicated to human penmen.

In like manner, the Old Testament is the result of inspired writers (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). In addition to the red-letter words of Jesus, all Scripture deserves to be viewed as coming from the same divine source. As such, then, and for a fuller understanding of God’s will for and plan for mankind, we will resort to **all** of God’s Word (Romans 15:4), though in this Christian Age, we are amenable to the New Testament portion of the Bible (Romans 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:7-16; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:8-13).

Why must faithful Christians abide in the teachings of the Gospel or the New Testament, beyond merely the words that Jesus personally spoke? **Because Jesus said so!** Why do Christians study the Old Testament in addition to the words of Jesus and the balance of the New Testament? **Because Jesus said so!**

Why is the best practice to implement the New Testament into one’s life? **Because Jesus said so! Period! End of story!** 

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Jesus Is the Only Way!

Jerry Bates

Jesus made a very bold and politically incorrect statement in John 14:6. “...*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, except through Me*” (NKJV). Most people in the world do not accept the truthfulness of this statement.

Unfortunately, most Christians do not believe it to be true either. I have read that 60-70% of those who claim to be Christians believe that there are at least a few other ways to get to God than through Jesus. Of course, that directly contradicts this statement by Jesus.

Jesus said that He is the way. Notice He did not say His teachings would lead one to God or that He shows us the way, but the He Himself **IS** the way. Of course, one cannot really separate His teachings from the person of Jesus. Jesus opened the way to God. “*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh*” (Hebrews 10:19-20). Since the Way is a Person, we must have a personal relationship with Jesus, which comes by faith. We are in the Way when we love Him and keep His commandments. “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him*” (John 14:21).

Jesus said He is the truth. Notice again, that He did not merely say He taught the truth but that He **IS** the truth. Truth is the only thing that can set us free from the bondage of sin (John 8:32). “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. ...For the law was given through*

Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14, 17).

Jesus said He is the Life. Common to all cultures is the desire to live a peaceful and a happy life. All cultures also look for an eternal life, something beyond this world. Jesus offers both. Jesus offers the abundant life here. *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). He also offers us an eternal life. John 1:4 declares that life is in Jesus. Shortly before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus announced, *“...I am the resurrection and the life...”* (John 11:25).

Most people consider this statement arrogant and self-righteous. I think the reason for this attitude is quite simple. They do not believe Jesus to be Who the Bible proclaims Him to be. When considering this statement, most want to compare Jesus to any other religious teacher. For example, if I or any other teacher would make a




statement like that, everyone would say we were either arrogant or just plain wrong. Why is it no one else could make a statement like that? The answer is simple. Jesus is Divine, whereas anyone else is simply human. A man could not make a statement like that; however, Jesus certainly could and did. In actuality, if Jesus really is God, then that is the only statement Jesus could make.

Jesus said He is the way. How could any man find a way to a God no one has ever seen before? Only Jesus as God would know the way to God.

Jesus said He is the truth. God’s Word is truth. No man can ever figure out the truth of God unless it is revealed to Him. Only Jesus as God knows the mind of God and could reveal the truth of God to man.

Jesus said He is life. Anyone who believes there is a God believes that only God can give life. Therefore, Jesus as God is the only One who can give life. Thus, when one believes Jesus to be God, as John declares Him to be, then the statement is not arrogant. Rather, it is the only logical conclusion to which one can arrive when one believes Jesus to be God. That is why most people cannot accept this statement. Most do not accept Jesus to be the Son of God.

However, while in one sense the statement is **exclusive**, it excludes any who do not believe in Jesus. On the other hand, it is also very **inclusive**. All people all over the world have equal access to God and salvation. There is no other area of life in which this is true. Housing in some areas is much more expensive than other areas. For example, in many places if one would want a beautiful view of a lake, ocean or mountains, the homes are very expensive – much more expensive than many, including myself, could afford. Therefore, it does not matter how much one might want a home like that, he is excluded. One might want to be a professional ball player. However, most people, including myself, do not have the physical talent necessary to do that. Therefore, regardless of how much a person might want it or work at it, he is excluded from such activity. One might want to do a certain job, but he is excluded due to lack of education or physical ability. Education itself is often limited or excluded from people due to lack of money, physical location, family problems or other things that prevent one from getting a good education. Many people are excluded from good medical care, again due to lack of money, ability to travel to the place the care is given or other factors. We can see that in virtually every area of life, one is excluded from where he can go or what he can do based on certain factors outside of his control.

However, such factors are not relevant to our salvation. **Salvation and access to God is free to everyone all over the world and under the exact same conditions.** All one needs to do is come to faith in Christ and surrender his life in obedience to His Word. Everyone, regardless of his location, physical strength, physical ability or education, can come to Christ and be saved. This is why Christians can go all over the world – to affluent or developing countries – and preach the same Gospel, which same Gospel people can obey. This is the only area of life that is truly open to everyone with no restrictions or limitations. **Everyone can be saved in Christ!** *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek [non-Jew], there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26-28). 

Jerry Bates is a missionary, Gospel preacher and one of the editors of the quarterly magazine *The Voice of Truth International*. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



PARADOXES OF CHRISTIANITY: DESPISED, YET HONORED

Shane Fisher

A paradox is defined as “a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com). The Bible contains many paradoxes that unveil great truths. The paradox we want to examine is that a **faithful Christian** is despised in the eyes of the world, yet honored in the sight of God.

HOW “DESPISED” AND “HONORED” ARE USED IN THE BIBLE

“Despised” means “to regard with contempt, distaste, disgust, or disdain.” **The Bible affirms that people did despise certain other people.** The Persians thought Queen Vashti’s decision would lead other women to despise their husbands (Esther 1:17). Children can despise their parents (Proverbs 23:22). People ultimately despise God (Malachi 1:6-7).

The Bible affirms we can despise certain things. Fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7). The Bible teaches the Lord despises some things such as heartless worship (Amos 5:21).

The Bible affirms we are not to despise some things. The Lord does not despise the prayers of the righteous (Psalm 102:17) and a contrite and broken spirit (Psalm 51:17). Christians are not to despise the chastening of the Lord (Proverbs 3:11; Hebrews 12:5-6), God as our Master (Matthew 6:24), God’s goodness that can lead to repentance (Romans 2:4), the church of God (1 Corinthians 11:22) and the young people of our congregations (1 Timothy 4:12).

“Honored” means to “highly regard.” **The Bible affirms we are to honor certain things.** We are to honor persons such as our fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-4), widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16), elders (1 Timothy 5:17,18), other church members (Romans 12:10) and government officials (1 Peter 2:17).

Gracious women retain honor (Proverbs 11:16; 31:25). A woman who submits to her God-given role is one to whom honor is given (1 Peter 3:1-7). We are to honor our physical bodies by not using them as sinful instruments (1 Thessalonians 4:4). God honored human beings as the crown of His creation (Psalm 8:5). We can honor God with our giving (Proverbs 3:10). We are to honor Deity above all (1 Samuel 2:29-30; Psalm 104:1; Revelation 4:11). Those who honor the Son also honor the Father (John 5:23).

The Bible affirms we are not to honor certain things. The fool ought to not be honored (Proverbs 26:1).

JESUS: THE DESPISED, YET HONORED

It was prophesied that Jesus would be despised. There are prophecies in the Old Testament showing He would fulfill this specific detail. He grew up in the despised town of Nazareth. He was despised at His crucifixion.

Psalm 22:6-8 states, *“But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’”*

Isaiah 53:1-3 declares, *“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”*

Jesus was despised for several reasons. (1) Jesus was despised because He taught the truth in love (John 7:16). He taught the truth to the Samaritan woman who was living in fornication (John 4:16-18). He taught the truth to the rich young ruler about his covetousness (Mark 10:17-22).

(2) Jesus was despised because He always did what was right. He

cleaned out the Temple of God that had been turned into a den of thieves (Luke 19:45-46). (3) Jesus was despised because He did not tolerate the wickedness of people. He wanted a woman to not commit adultery again (John 8:1-11). Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites because of the various sinful activities in which they were involved (Matthew 23).

(4) Jesus was despised because He always did what His Father wanted Him to do (John 6:38). Hebrews 2:6-8 (quoted from Psalm 8) states, *“But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”*

There are various reasons why Jesus ought to be honored. Jesus had the heart of a servant, and He was the humblest of all men. Jesus became the Savior of all men, and the Father highly exalted Him because of what He accomplished – His death – which can bring about the forgiveness of sins (Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:28).

THE DESPISED, YET HONORED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Jesus gave certain prophecies that His followers would be despised (John 15:18-24; 17:13-19). There are various reasons why Jesus’ disciples would be despised.



(1) His followers are despised because they teach the truth in love just like He did (Ephesians 4:15). (2) Jesus' followers are despised because they are striving to do what is right and the world hates them for it (1 John 1:7-9; John 15:18,19). (3) Jesus' followers are despised because they do not tolerate the wicked behavior of the world just as He did not tolerate wickedness (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). (4) Jesus' followers are despised because they are constantly striving to do what their Father wants them to do, and the world hates them when the light exposes their wicked deeds (Matthew 5:10-12; John 3:19-21).

CONCLUSION

Jesus said, *“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor”* (John 12:26). Those who are made holy will be fit for God's eternal dwelling place (Hebrews 12:14). Christians have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). It is because of God's mercy and grace that we are given this free gift (Romans 6:23). We can receive this gift through faith and obedience to God's conditions of pardon (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-9).

Luke 6:22-23, 26 states, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets...Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”* Christians will be despised by the world, yet honored by God. The greatest honor one can receive is so much greater than a trophy, a scholarship or winning the Nobel Peace prize. **What more honor could one want or receive than to be highly regarded by the Greatest Being there is?** Do you want to be honored by God? Or, do you wish to be despised by God? God will take vengeance on the wicked on Judgment Day (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). God will honor those who will honor His Word. ✝

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1932—2008

Are Christians In All Churches?

J.C. Choate

We are told by some that there are Christians, children of God, in all of the churches. That is strange language because nowhere in Scripture do we read of such. In those pages, we read of only **one church**, the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18). Furthermore, the action that puts a person into one church does not put him into another church. For example, following the terms of entrance into the Lord's church does not put one into a denominational church. Neither do the terms of entrance into a denominational church, if followed, put one into Christ's church. In addition, what makes one a member of one denomination will not make him a member of another denominational church. Whoever heard of a person joining a Baptist church and ending up in a Methodist church? Each church has its own conditions for membership.

The only way a member of the Lord's church would become a part of a denomination would be for him to become **unfaithful** and **join** that church. Even then, very few of those denominations would accept a member of the church into their fellowship without requiring that he meet the terms or conditions for membership.


Whoever heard of a person thinking he was joining one business for work and ending up working for another business? Whoever heard of one complying with the terms of entrance into one college and ending up being accepted by another college for his school work? Whoever heard of planting one seed and seeing that seed produce a different kind of seed? **Whoever heard of one joining a denominational church and accidentally ending up being a member of Christ's church?**

Christ said, *"It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught*

of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). How can one know what to do to be saved and to be a member of the Lord’s church unless he is properly taught of God, taught those things he must do to become a child of God? Paul said that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Christ said that the Truth makes us free (John 8:32). Again, the Lord declared that when one believes and is baptized, he is saved (Mark 16:16), and when one is saved, the Lord will add him to His church (Acts 2:47), not to some other organization created by men.

Christ said, *“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). The water here refers to baptism, being buried in water, and coming forth from the water, which makes the birth possible. The kingdom, here, is the church. If we go to Romans 6, Galatians 3:26-27 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are again told that when one is buried in the waters of baptism, his sins are washed away and he enters Christ, becoming a child of God. He is then a new creature in Christ. Acts 2:47 tells us that when one is saved, the Lord adds him to His church. Now, for all of this to happen, one must be taught, studying God’s Word so that he can know the Truth. In response, he can comply with it and be what the Lord would have him to be.

Reading through the Book of Acts, we find the Gospel being constantly taught and, as a result, the hearers obeyed the Lord and were added to the church. To what else was there to be added since there was only one church in the first century? It was centuries later that the multitudes of denominational churches were started by men!

In addition, it is a dangerous thing to tell anyone that he is saved when he is a member of a denominational church, or to assure him that his “baptism” into that church is acceptable for becoming a Christian, and he doesn’t have to be “baptized again.” How could that person conclude that the Lord saved him when he ended up in a denominational church? If he has finally learned the truth and recognizes the importance of the church of the Bible, let him comply with the conditions of pardon so he can know that he has obeyed the Lord to be saved and to be added to the church, the bride of Christ that wears His name – the church of Christ. 

J.C. Choate (1932-2008) was the Founding Editor of The Voice of Truth International.



Because He Lives

Byron Nichols

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the

Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (2 Corinthians 11:24-27 NKJV)

Most men would rather die than to be subjected to all of these things. What could possibly motivate a man to endure such things?

Paul, the man who did, in fact, endure all these things, asked this same question. We read his question in 1 Corinthians 15:30, which reads, “**Why do we stand in jeopardy (danger) every hour?**” In this great chapter on the resurrection, Paul wrote about the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

In the first four verses, he strongly affirmed Christ’s resurrection. He asserted, “**For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.**” Then in verses 5-11, Paul mentioned individuals and groups who saw Jesus alive after having been in the tomb for three days. He declared that Jesus “**was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once... After that He was seen by James, then**

by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me [Paul] also, as by one born out of due time.”

Some of Paul’s strongest words on any subject appear in verses 12-19 as he proceeded to show that our only hope hinges upon whether the body of Jesus had life restored to it in the tomb and was raised. Note his dynamic affirmation of that resurrection.

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep [died] in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.




Let’s look again at the question we read from Paul earlier in verse 30. *“Why do we stand in jeopardy [danger] every hour?”* He actually had already provided the answer to his own question in verse 19, where he stated plainly, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”*

Once more, why did Paul and the other apostles put their own lives in

danger on a daily basis? They did so because they knew that Christ had been raised from the dead, and because they also knew that their (and **our**) hope for being resurrected is based entirely on **His** resurrection.

In Matthew 28:6, an angel said to some women at the tomb of Jesus, “*He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*” The Scriptures state that a stone had been placed at the front of the tomb of Jesus, and it was also sealed to make it even more difficult to move. Mark 16:4 tells us that this stone “*was very large.*” Friends, let me tell you that the very large, very heavy stone that was positioned on the outside of this tomb was but a very small **pebble** compared to the **Rock of Ages** on the inside!

This is what the Christian hope is all about. We have hope **only because Jesus lives** as the result of **His resurrection**.

I say this just as kindly as I know how. This hope and this confidence that we all will experience our own resurrection one day to be with the Lord is only available to those who have committed their lives to Him. In order that we may join the Savior and the Father in Heaven for eternity, we must be found among those who have obeyed the commandments of the Lord and have lived faithfully for Him. 

Byron Nichols is Editor Emeritus of The Voice of Truth International. He resides in Springfield, Missouri, USA.

He is not here
HE IS RISEN

MATTHEW 28:6

COLOSSIANS 3:17

**“AND *WHATEVER* YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED,
DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS,
GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.”**

AUTHORITY REGARDING BAPTISM/SALVATION

ACTS 2:38, “38 THEN PETER SAID TO THEM, ‘REPENT, AND LET EVERY ONE OF YOU BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS; AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.’”

ACTS 10:48, “48 AND HE COMMANDED THEM TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD...”

ACTS 19:5, “5 WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”

ACTS 22:10, 16: “10 SO I SAID, ‘WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?’ AND THE LORD SAID TO ME, ‘ARISE AND GO INTO DAMASCUS, AND THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD ALL THINGS WHICH ARE APPOINTED FOR YOU TO DO.’” “16 AND NOW WHY ARE YOU WAITING? ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED, AND WASH AWAY YOUR SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:11, “11 AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU. BUT YOU WERE WASHED, BUT YOU WERE SANCTIFIED, BUT YOU WERE JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD.”

STOP LISTENING TO MEN WHO SAY, “BAPTISM IS NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.” OBEY JESUS TODAY!

COLOSSIANS 3:17

**"AND *WHATEVER* YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED,
DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS,
GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM."**

AUTHORITY REGARDING THE CHURCH

FOR PREACHING: ACTS 9:29, RE: PAUL, "29 AND HE SPOKE BOLDLY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS AND DISPUTED AGAINST THE HELLENISTS, BUT THEY ATTEMPTED TO KILL HIM." SEE ALSO 1 TIMOTHY. 4:1-5.

FOR WORSHIP: COLOSSIANS 3:16-17, "16 LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD. 17 AND WHATEVER YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM." SINGING, NOT PLAYING, IS AUTHORIZED FOR WORSHIP. SEE JOHN 4:23-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-34.

FOR DISCIPLINE: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:4-5, "4 IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHEN YOU ARE GATHERED TOGETHER, ALONG WITH MY SPIRIT, WITH THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, 5 DELIVER SUCH A ONE TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH, THAT HIS SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS." SEE 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6 ALSO.

**STOP DOING YOUR OWN THING, THINKING THE
LORD WILL APPROVE. OBEY JESUS TODAY!**

The One True God Is Three Persons

Sunny David

Over the years, there have been many distortions of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, which is the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three distinct spiritual Persons in one Godhead. The word “*Godhead*” or the “*Divine Nature*” appears in the New Testament three times in Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9. It simply means “that which is divine.” There are various Bible references that indicate that there are three divine Personalities Who are eternal and are identified as God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. The English word “God” is the translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is a plural of the Majesty. The plural form *Elohim* carrying with it the actual meaning of the Godhead appears more than three thousand times in the Old Testament. This means **that in most cases when the English reader reads the word “God” in the Bible in the singular sense, the Scriptures are actually referring to the Godhead.**

There was a plurality of divine beings in the beginning when this creation was perfected. This is evidently clear as we read in Genesis 1:26, “*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’*” – a **plurality of persons** being used. The Godhead was present “*in the beginning.*” God was behind the whole creation, planning it (Hebrews 1:1); Christ, the Son, was present (John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:16-17) and the Holy Spirit was present (Genesis 1:1-2). Throughout the Old Testament, the idea of a plural God is present in the word *Elohim*, used for God in its pages, but in the New Testament it is made clear that the *Elohim*, the plural God or the Godhead, is composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; John 5:17; 8:16; 13:3; 16:7, 27-28; Acts 2:33; 10:38; etc.). The apostle Paul, in Romans 15:30, asked the brethren at Rome to pray for him, and he mentioned the Godhead. The Godhead is also mentioned in the apostle’s benediction to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:14).

There are some, however, who teach the false doctrine that there is only one Person in the Godhead, revealing Himself in three different ways

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as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence, they deny the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and teach that Jesus is the only God, that He alone is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They believe these are only three different titles of the same Person. They go so far as to teach that all those who have been baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19, must be baptized again in the name of Jesus only to be saved!

Surely, the Bible definitely teaches that there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4), but the Bible also teaches, as already observed, that the one true God exists in three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not playing three separate roles one after the other, but He exists independently, eternally and simultaneously in the three-fold relationship. This is not to say that there are three Gods in one, but there is only one God or Godhead in which there are three distinct spiritual Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They all are of the same substance – literally character (Hebrews 1:1-3). They are infinite in being, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.

The unity of the Godhead consists not in the unity of purpose only but in the common nature, in the sameness of Divine Nature. We witness all of these three relating to one another at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17, where we observe, first, ***“Jesus came up immediately from the water,”*** second, ***“the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him,”*** third, ***“And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*** Here we clearly observe the three divine Persons of the Trinity together. Yet, someone objects by saying, “The Bible never uses the word Trinity; therefore, we shouldn’t.” The truth is, the Bible never uses the word “Bible” either. However, in both cases the idea is in the Scripture, so the words can’t be wrong. The term “Trinity” is not a biblical term, that is, it does not appear in the New Testament, but it is a biblical concept. When Christ gave, what we rightly call, the “Great Commission” (again, not a biblical phrase but a biblical concept) to His disciples, He sent them to make disciples of all nations by ***“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*** (Matthew 28:19), the command was given

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by the authority of each of these three Divine Persons in the Godhead.

Also, some verses of the Scriptures make no sense unless God is triune. According to John 14:16-17, to His disciples Christ said, ***“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”*** The question is, how could the Father send another Helper, other than Jesus, if the other Helper is also Jesus? Again, in Mark 13:32 Christ said that neither the angels in Heaven nor the Son knows the day of His coming, but only the Father knows. What a gross lie that would be if He and the Father were the same Person! Would it not be mockery for Jesus to cry, as we read in Matthew 27:46, ***“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”*** if He Himself were the Father?

To speak of three eternal and divine Persons in the one Godhead is to recognize the relationship that exists between the three in the divine nature. God – the Father, the Word (Jesus) – the Son and the Holy Spirit, Who is also called the Helper (John 14:26; 16:7). The three Persons of the Godhead are one true God, the *Elohim*, Who created in the beginning the heavens and the earth and together accomplished the work of salvation of man. Of course, in accomplishing the work of salvation of humanity there is implicated a certain relative subordination in the modes of operating of different Persons, by which it is the Father Who sent the Word, the Son, to be the propitiation for the sins of the world. The Son, when He, after His propitiatory death, burial and resurrection, returned to the Father for the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. The Spirit was sent to apply redemption to men (John 14: 25-26; 16:5-15; Acts 1:1-8; Acts 2:1-4). Yet, the three Persons of the Godhead are uniformly represented in the Scriptures as in their essential nature, each alike, God over all. †

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and he is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord’s church.



GOD

God's Love Is Amazing and Incredible!

Mark N. Posey

God's love through Jesus Christ is multileveled and manifold in source, force, and course! Notice the following.

God's love has a **source!** "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8 NKJV). God is light (1 John 1:5); God is Spirit (John 4:24) and God is Fire (Hebrews 12:29). However, the most glorious attribute of His essence is **love** (Ephesians 2:4). In matters of Truth – unity! In matters of opinion – liberty! In all things – love! **God's love is wide enough to include all humans! God's love is long enough to last through all eternity! God's love is deep enough to reach the lowest sinner! God's love is high enough to take us to Heaven!**

God's love has a **force!** "*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). God is able to raise children from rocks (Matthew 3:9), restore the fallen (Romans 11:20), abound in grace (2 Corinthians 9:8), deliver (Daniel 3:17), protect (Jude 24) and more (Ephesians 3:20-21). One of the greatest abilities of God, though, is to completely save those who come to Him through Jesus (Hebrews 7:25). This salvation is unchanging, secure and permanent (John 14:6). "*Uttermost*" means, "completely, perfectly, utterly." We know power (force): light that can blind, wind that can topple and fire that can melt, but God's power is greater. "*With God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26). God is omnipotent (i.e., unlimited power)! **God's love is the most powerful force in the universe!**

God's love has a **course!** "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). God's love reaches to the young and old, rich and poor, male and female, and strong and weak. "The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin" (Song: "The Love of God").

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Powerful! God loves the world (John 3:16), Jesus loves the church (Ephesians 5:25) and Christ loves me (Galatians 2:20). God did not wait until the world turned to Him for love before He gave Jesus as our sacrifice; God demonstrated His love to sinners by His Son's death (Romans 5:8). Compare 1 John 4:20, which reads, ***"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"***



Years ago, a poorly dressed boy walked several miles through the snowy streets of Chicago, determined to attend a Sunday School on the opposite side of the city from which he lived. When he arrived, he was asked, "Why did you come to a Sunday School so far away? Why didn't you go to one near your home?" He answered simply, "Because you love a fellow over here." Oscar Hammerstein once said, "A bell's not a bell 'til you ring it – A song's not a song 'til you sing it – Love in your heart wasn't put there to stay – Love isn't love 'til you give it away!" **Thank God for His amazing and incredible love! Those that receive it are blessed; those that possess it are rich! ✝**

Mark N. Posey is the preacher for the church of Christ in Winfield, Alabama, USA.

A Hidden Strength

Jeremy Wade Barrier

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:16–17 NKJV). My eyes shot open, yet nothing but darkness was before my eyes. I reached out my hand into the abyss touching the corner of the dresser where I knew, without sight, that my wristwatch rested. I clicked the button, and several numbers luminescently appeared three inches from my face: 3:20 a.m.

I was supposed to be resting before I left the house at 4:00 a.m. to drive to the airport in Nashville, Tennessee, soon after which to fly to Bolivia to spend time with several of the churches of Christ located in La Paz. However, I couldn’t sleep. Just a few more minutes of rest was what I needed but couldn’t have. As I lay there, I reminisced on other mission trips I had taken abroad, while simultaneously the passage of Scripture mentioned above kept running through my mind – the **power** of the Gospel.

I still remember as a child the first time I heard it preached. The Preacher said, “The **dynamite** of the Gospel.” Brother Gean, the preacher, was dripping with sweat and tears in that small one-room schoolhouse of a church building in mid-August as he bellowed out. It was hot, but the fury of the message was hotter. This image stuck with me. I’ve remembered this sermon ever since. Even through the hundreds of language courses in college where I was able to study Greek and other biblical languages, I still remember as a highpoint of my education the day we memorized the Greek word for “power.” The word was *dynamis*. Even now as I stare at it upon this page, I can see it – dynamite.

The reminiscences that were moving through my head as I lay in my bed at 3:20 a.m. showed me pictures and images of children running, laughing and throwing objects playfully through the air. I was in Bengaluru, India. The year was 2006. The young Indian children were so happy. The

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occasion was an international seminar on how Indians were going to go about carrying the Gospel (i.e., the *Good News*) to all of India *themselves*. I was walking through neighborhoods with other missionaries during the month of October, and the occasion for the children was the Hindu festival of Diwali. There were lots of fireworks. Those children were *playfully* throwing fireworks about. Why does this image come to my mind? The ‘fireworks’ that are legal for 10-year-olds in India would be *way illegal* in the USA. I remember standing about 15 feet from the firework as it was lit and thrown just in front of me. When the explosion erupted just 5 yards from my face, I felt a wind hit me across the length of my body, and I felt my hair being pushed back behind me in the wind. These fireworks were *dangerously powerful*, and I thought of the power of dynamite. This, of course, reminded me of the Gospel.



God in His Divine wisdom presented a magnificent message through the ink of Paul’s letter to the Romans. In the opening lines of the letter, something profound and subtle was stated: ***“I am not ashamed of the***

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Gospel of Christ.” “Why would anyone be ashamed of good news?” you ask. My thoughts exactly. The next part explains everything. The good news is that through the muscular forcing of air out of my lungs and through my vocal cords something amazing happens. I speak of my faith and the Message comes forth. It is not any message, but it is the message that has power. This is not just any power. This is not the strength of the legs of a cheetah pouncing upon its prey. This is not the strength of the lion’s jaws that will break any bone that it gnashes upon. This is not the strength of water moving powerfully through the three-gorges dam and turning massive multi-ton turbines. Nor is it the power of nuclear warfare ready to incinerate any location or life within miles of the radius. No, this is something more powerful. This power of God saves. This power of God heals. This power stops the cheetah in its tracks. This power seizes the lion’s jaw and holds it steady. This power stops the turbine in mid-turn and neutralizes the bomb before impact. This is the power of God. This is the power of that divine Creator Who not only created but sustains all life. There is nothing greater. There is nothing more significant. It is dynamite.

While the feeling of personal sadness overwhelms me at 3:30 a.m., I arise. The sadness of missing my wife and children who will not be with me in Bolivia. Although the pain of separation from all that I know at my home and in my house hurts deeply, I step forward. We will be doing the work of God. We will be sharing the message of healing and salvation – the Good News. It just might be the case that this power will leave my lips, and God’s strength just might cut deeply through the epidermis, passing through the ribs, lungs and piercing the heart with the result of changing someone’s life. This could be transformative. As stated in Isaiah 55:8, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord.*” Sometimes, I underestimate the Gospel and forget that this strength, in many ways, is a hidden strength. As I arise from my bed, I cease my rest with a thanksgiving prayer. The mission will now begin. 

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THE WORD OF GOD

God Has a Symphony

Van Sprague

We define the word “symphony” as an intricate composition of music. I imagine that diverse parts are coordinated into a whole and fit the composer’s design. We get our word “symphony” from the Greek word *symphonia*. It’s a compound word, and the two parts mean “together” “sound.” It’s not the case that every word that looks like a similar English word has a similar meaning. Nor is it the case that every word’s meaning is like the parts of the word that make it up. However, this is what *symphonia* does.

Two hundred and fifty years before Jesus was born, the Septuagint used this word in Daniel 3 to describe the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre and psaltery together “in symphony” (vs. 5, 7, 10, 15). The usage of the word didn’t change much in the next two and a half centuries. In Luke 15, Jesus’ description of the celebration of the return of the prodigal son described the older brother drawing near and hearing “music.” Using this word picture, we have a vivid illustration of how inspiration works. When the addition of Gentiles to the church was a point of sharp contention, there was a meeting in Jerusalem to discuss the matter. The simple, yet important, decision was that the Scriptures taught it was always in God’s plan for the Gentiles to be part of the church. Before elaborating with Old Testament Scripture, James began his case explaining, **“...with this the words of the prophets agree...”** (Acts 15:15 NKJV).

“Agree” is translated from a word related to “symphony.” **“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:21). **“All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God...”** (2 Timothy 3:16). “Inspiration” is a compound word meaning “God-breathed.” From the beginning of time, God has sounded through his instruments – the prophets. They each, with their distinct voices, contributed parts to the chorus. At the time of their performance, the speakers often did not know how their part would fit into the whole (1 Peter 1:10-12). They were ridiculed – even killed – for their seemingly misplaced roles (Matthew 5:11, 12; 23:29-32). As the Composer and Director designed, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). The crescendo of our Father’s piece came into immaculate harmony as Jesus bore the sins of all mankind, defeated death and ascended to sit on His throne. The main symphony He composed can be seen blended together in the pages of His Word today, having been spoken and written just as He moved His servants to speak and write. Are you listening?.....✚

Van Sprague is the minister for the Houston Park Church of Christ in Selma, Alabama, USA.

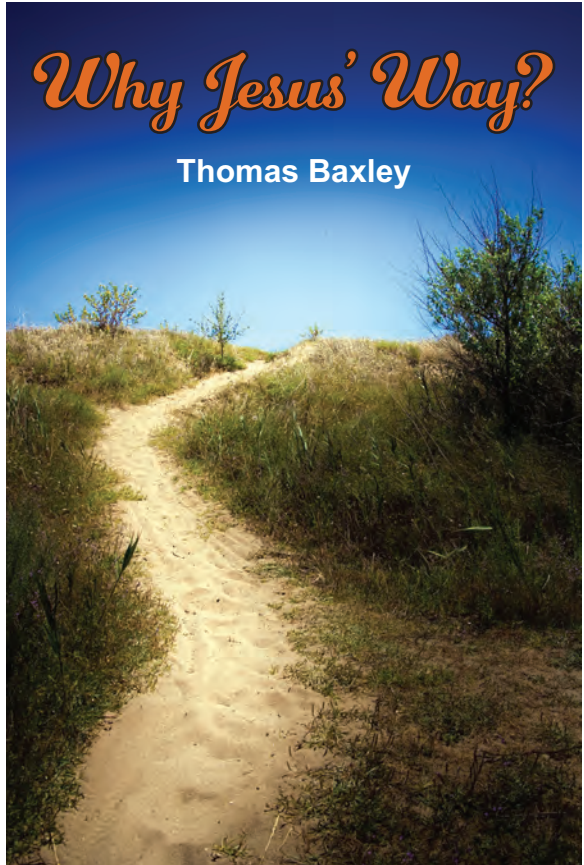
THE WORD OF GOD

The issue of authority is one of the more important foundational topics that is frequently ignored by much of the religious world. However, I am glad to say that it is changing. More and more, people are considering the issue, and so, here are some things to share with others on why we should do things Jesus' way instead of in our own ways. First, Jesus is Creator (John 1:1-10); as such, naturally, He has the authority to set law and tell us what He expects and desires of us. Second, Jesus is our Redeemer (Galatians 3:13). Since He gave His life for us to free us

from sin (Galatians 1:4), we honor Him by doing things His way. Finally, Jesus is our Judge (John 12:48). He declared that there is one path to God, and it is through Him (John 14:6). Therefore, there is no other way but Jesus' way! ✚

[Editor's Note: The Bible – the Good News – is the only source to which one can turn to know Jesus' way. Especially the New Testament portion of the Bible pertains to Jesus Christ and His way. After all, that section of the Bible is entitled, "The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Thomas Baxley preaches for the Highway Nine Church of Christ in Piedmont, Alabama, USA.



Verse Search



2 CORINTHIANS 4: 1-18

Jerry Bates

1. Since Paul said he had received mercy, what did he say he was not going to do? (4:1)
2. In what two things did Paul say that he had not walked? (4:2)
3. Paul said the minds of those who were perishing had been blinded. Who did the blinding? (4:4)
4. Who did Paul say that he did not preach? (4:5)
5. What was the treasure that Paul said was in earthen vessels? (4:7)
6. Why did God see fit to put this treasure in earthen vessels? (4:7)
7. Why did Paul say he always carried in his life the dying of the Lord Jesus? (4:10)
8. Paul said _____ was working in him, but _____ was working in them. (4:12)
9. Who was going to raise them up in the last day? (4:14)
10. What part of Paul was being renewed day by day? (4:16)
11. What was Paul's "light affliction" working for him? (4:17)
12. At what was Paul looking? (4:18)
13. "For the things which are seen are _____, but the things which are not seen are _____." (4:18)

(See the inside back cover for answers)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. **2** But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. **3** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, **4** whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. **5** For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. **6** For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Cast Down but Unconquered

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. **8** We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – **10** always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. **11** For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So then death is working in us, but life in you. **13** And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, **14** knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. **15** For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Seeing the Invisible

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. **17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, **18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

NOTE: This chapter is the conclusion to what Paul had said concerning his ministry in the previous chapters. The god of this age (Satan) had blinded the hearts and minds of the world, and this was causing great problems for Paul. He constantly looked at the things which are not seen. This should also be a great source of encouragement to us. We have suffered nothing like what Paul did, and as long as we keep our eyes on the unseen things, we can be strong like Paul and continue serving God.

The Deer Ked

David Everson



The outdoorsmen among our readers have just come through one of the most important times of the year, the buck firearms season. Hopefully everyone was safe and successful at filling their freezer with venison. While we could talk about the incredible senses that God created in the whitetail deer, as each hunter knows, instead I would like to talk about a mostly unseen parasite found on the deer population – the neotropical deer ked. Let's look at what God created in this amazing member of the fly family.

The deer ked is described as an ectoparasite (a fancy word for living on the outside of the host) of the white-tailed deer in the southeastern United States. It is an introduced species of biting fly originally found in Europe, Siberia and China. It is found as a parasite on whitetail deer, elk, horses, cattle and humans. On humans, the deer ked will engorge on blood in 15 to 25 minutes. The bite is barely noticeable and leaves very little trace at first. Within three days, the site develops into a hard, reddened welt where the bite occurred. The accompanying itch is intense and may last 14 to 20 days. Currently, deer keds are not known to carry any diseases to humans, although some research shows that Lyme disease may be transmitted by them.

Adult deer keds are about 1/8 - 3/16 inches in length. Its head, thorax and abdomen are flattened and leathery in appearance. The head and thorax are

EVIDENCES

brown, and the abdomen is a greenish yellow with light-brown plates on the posterior segments. Deer ked legs are stout with large dark claws with hairs designed to point in opposite directions that allow the ked to hold onto and crawl through the hair as deer flee from hunters. Overall, the ked is covered with strong, dark hairs. Many hunters who see them crawling on a recent kill think they are ticks, but these insects are fast moving in the deer hair and only have six legs, unlike ticks that have eight legs and move very slowly.

During early summer and autumn, the larva grows into an adult ked that has wings, and they fly about in search of deer. As soon as the fly lands on a host, it begins to burrow through the fur, shedding its wings by breaking them off close to their bases, which are visible on the fly when a hunter sees them. The keds then bite the deer to get a blood meal. The female will find a mate, and after an unknown period of time, the female will give birth to a live, mature larva. God designed this fly to give birth to live young with no eggs being laid. This unusual ability is called viviparity by scientists who study insect reproduction.

The female will then repeat the process and produce an unknown number of young. These larvae will fall off the deer to the ground and wait until spring to grow into a winged adult to fly away looking for a host.

The deer ked has no effect on the meat from an infected deer, but should there be an overabundance of keds on a single deer, they could affect its health by sucking out too much blood. Usually, this parasite is just a nuisance for the deer population.

So, God broke the design for most insects in the creation of the deer ked by allowing it to have live birth. Let us praise the Master Designer for His marvels that we can see in the world around us. †

David Everson is a retired biology teacher and conducts creation science seminars. He is also an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA.



Did You Know?

The author of the New Testament epistle of James was the half brother of Jesus.



Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

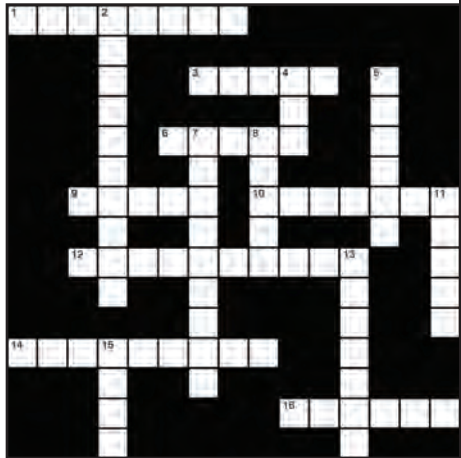
Judges: Ibzan, Elon & Abdon (Judges 12:8-15)

Across

- 1 Abdon was the son of Hillel from _____. (12:15)
- 3 Abdon had how many sons? (12:14)
- 6 Who was the tenth judge of Israel? (12:8)
- 9 How many years did Abdon judge Israel? (12:14)
- 10 Abdon's sons and grandsons rode on what? (12:14)
- 12 Elon the _____ judged Israel. (12:11)
- 14 Where did Ibzan get wives for his sons? (12:9)
- 16 How many sons did Ibzan have? (12:9)

Down

- 2 In what mountains was Abdon buried? (12:15)
- 4 How many years did Elon judge Israel? (12:11)
- 5 Who was Abdon's father? (12:13)
- 7 Where was Ibzan buried? (12:10)
- 8 Who was the twelfth judge of Israel? (12:13)
- 11 How many years did Ibzan judge Israel? (12:9)
- 13 In what land was Abdon buried? (12:15)
- 15 Who was the eleventh judge of Israel? (12:11)



See inside back cover for the solution.

Salvation Passages

Eddie Cooper

When discussing the subject of salvation, some quote certain passages to the exclusion of others that also are relevant to the subject. For example, some will quote “...*Whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43

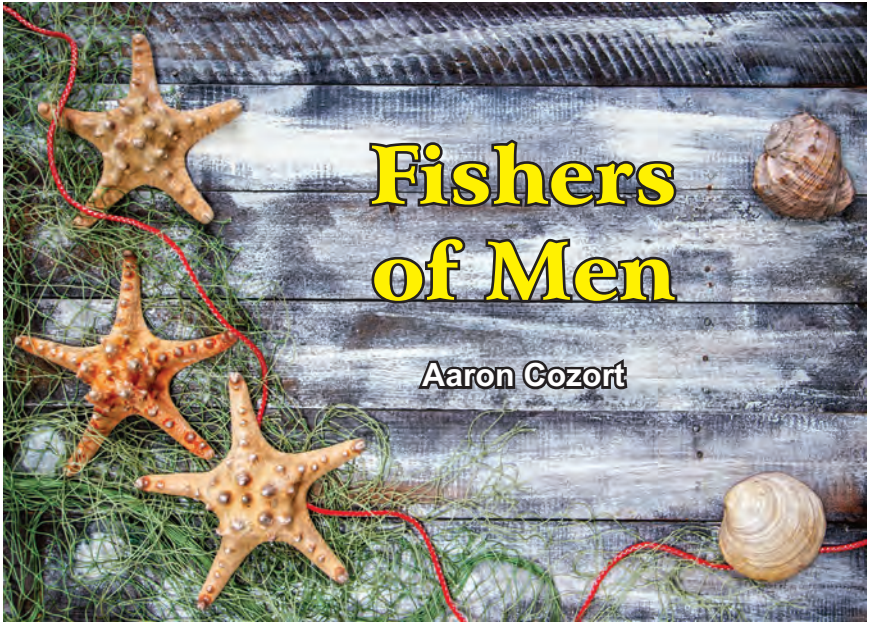


NKJV) and then make the claim this passage teaches that all one has to do to receive remission of sins is to believe. However, such assertions ignore other relevant passages, such as Acts 11:18, which teaches the essentiality of repentance. In addition, Acts 2:38 states, “...*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” The latter of these verses teaches that **both** repentance **and** baptism are **essential** in order to receive the remission of sins. Furthermore, Romans 10:9-10 teaches that **both** belief **and** confession of Christ are essential to salvation.

What all this means, and what should be obvious to all, is that **one must not ignore any** relevant biblical passage on a given subject in order to have the truth on that subject. Even the devil quotes Scripture (Matthew 5:4-6). However, the devil will quote some Scripture to the exclusion of other Scripture (Matthew 4:7). The New Testament teaches belief, repentance, confession and baptism for the remission of sins. **Which Scriptures do you ignore?** †

Eddie Cooper is a Gospel preacher who resides in South Charleston, West Virginia, USA.

SALVATION



Fishers of Men

Aaron Cozort

“And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men’” (Mark 1:16 NKJV). Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, and He spied a man and his brother. Their names were Simon and Andrew.

Previously, they had followed John the Baptist when he was preaching in Judea, and one of them, Andrew, was present the day following Jesus’ baptism when John declared, *“Behold, the Lamb of God.”* When Andrew heard John say this, he went to find his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. They listened to Jesus teach, and they obeyed His teaching. Fishing was their livelihood. This was their occupation, their trade. Some men, it might be said, live to fish, but Simon and Andrew fished to live.

Jesus came to them and said, *“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”* They immediately left their nets behind and followed Him. Following below are two important lessons from these events.

SALVATION

When Jesus Calls, You Have to Choose.

Jesus did not present a third alternative. Simon and Andrew had to choose to either stay or to follow Him. They made the right choice. They chose their Teacher. Their determination that souls were of greater value than fish was accurate. Their willingness to leave the relative safety of their trade for daily discipleship and teaching is an example to us that we should be willing to choose Christ [over everything else and over everybody ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor].

Servants to Money Cannot Freely Serve Christ.

Jesus said, “*You cannot serve God and mammon* [money]” (Matthew 6:24). Simon and Andrew did not live their lives burdened by debt, or as the Scriptures indicate, slaves to the “*lender*” (Proverbs 22:7). When a man is in debt, he must pay those debts. He lives for someone else. He works for someone else. His life and his freedom do not belong to him. He owes a debt, and it takes priority.

If Simon and Andrew were saddled with debt as are many young men in our day, they would have felt a necessity to stay with their nets. We need to encourage our young men to stay out of debt and stay free to serve God. ✝

[Editor’s Note: It is nearly impossible to remain debt free in a modern, industrialized world (e.g., car, house, education). However, there is a difference between being consumed with debt unnecessarily and pursuing primarily the needs of our families, while at the same time, satisfying our financial obligations (Romans 13:8). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Aaron Cozort preaches for the Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

Did You Know?

The author of the New Testament epistle of Jude was the half brother of Jesus.



SALVATION

What Does Baptism Mean?

Jerry R. Kendall

To understand the meaning and purpose of baptism as given by God, one needs to prayerfully study the Bible.

Cleansed (Acts 22:16; I Corinthians 6:9-11)

There is a God-pleasing washing that cleanses the obedient from the past. God revealed that baptism washes away sins and cleanses one through the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 1:5). “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus...” One goes from spiritual filth to being washed or cleansed beneath the fountain filled with blood provided because of God’s love.

Clothed (Galatians 3:26-27)

The old identity is covered with Christ, whom we are coming more and more to resemble (Romans 8:29). It’s now our heartfelt intention to let the beauty of Jesus be seen in our lives (1 Corinthians 11:1). We pattern our lives after the Lord. We go from being soiled to the whiteness and brightness made possible through His shed blood.

Freedom (Romans 6:16-18; I Corinthians 10:1-4)

Sin is slavery, and only in Christ can we be freed from sin (Romans 6:20-23). As Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt, we can be led triumphantly from sin’s bondage. Yet, this does not free us to do whatever we please, for liberty is not license but rather freedom to become what we should be through Christ. Imagine the blessing of going from the slavery of sin into the freedom provided by His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Freedom has its price, and let’s remember what it cost our loving Savior (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Burial and Resurrection (Romans 6:4)

Something in us dies before we are buried with Jesus Christ, and that

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is our past lives and desires to practice sin. We don't want sin to be our master anymore (Romans 6:14), but rather we bury the old life and rise together with Him to walk in newness of life. Baptism is grounded in the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20), and when we submit to His Lordship, there must be complete submission to His commands (Luke 6:46). When we believe in Christ, turn from (repent of) the practice of sinning, confess our faith in Him as Lord and the Son of God, then we are ready to be scripturally buried and raised with Jesus. Because a death (repentance) has occurred, now there must be a burial (Colossians

2:12; 3:3). Baptism is being covered over, immersed or buried, whereby we are cleansed, and then raised with our Lord.

Forgiveness (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16)

Baptism stands between God, man and forgiveness. We will never be saved from sin without responding to what God has commanded. In Christ's blood is forgiveness and redemption, and God has plainly told us where we contact the Son's sanctified blood (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

May we see the necessity and the eternal importance of complete obedience. Baptism is where one is born into God's family. One can't be in Christ without it. Let's listen to God! 

Jerry R. Kendall is a Gospel preacher residing in Lamar, Missouri, USA.



The Church of Christ Is All About...

Rodney Nulph

All kinds of ideas are put forth when the subject of the church comes up in religious circles. Some view the church as a “social club,” while others view it like a grocery store – you pick the one that just feels right and where you can get the *most for your money*. Sadly, some fail to even consider the church in light of God’s design and demands that are stipulated in the Bible. Because of this, the church is often viewed as nonessential, unimportant or optional. However, when one views the church through the eye of inspiration, one can see what the church of Christ is all about.

Firstly, the church of Christ is all about **liberation**. Please do not misunderstand; it is God **alone** Who pardons and liberates mankind from his sin. The church does not save, but rather the church is where the saved are placed and reside. Scripture abounds with this fact. When Paul wrote to the shepherds of Ephesus, he reminded them that the church was “*purchased*” with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; cf., 1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ liberated mankind when He “*gave Himself up*” (Ephesians 5:25). **The essentiality of the church is clearly seen in her purchase price!**

One cannot truly be liberated unless Christ liberates him or her and places one’s saved soul in the church where Christ is Head of the body (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), where Christ is King of the kingdom (1 Timothy 6:15; Colossians 1:13) and where Christ is the Groom married to His beloved bride (Ephesians 5:22-32). Thus, we are not liberated **by** the church but rather liberated by Christ and placed into His church. If I am liberated, then I am in His church; if I truly am in His church, then I have been liberated from sin. The church of Christ is all about **liberation!**

Secondly, the church of Christ is all about **connection**. One of the most wonderful and most difficult truths about the church is that it is made up of connections between people that normally may have had no connections

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with each other. That is wonderful because every personality, background and unique individual adds to the make-up of the body. This is most difficult because personality, background and individuals can separate and divide folks. Thus, it behooves each individual in the Lord's church to strive to love one another with a tender heart (Ephesians 4:32), to diligently work to see each other's perspective (Matthew 7:12) and to be patient with each other as we all grow and develop at different levels and in various stages.

Another awesome thing about the *connections* in the church is that we all have a divine standard for dealing with disagreements (Matthew 18:15-20). No family is without disagreements and disputes, but a true family never quits on any of its members. The church of Christ in the first century was made up of all different backgrounds and personalities, and yet, it was written by the inspired historian, "***And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers***" (Acts 2:42); "***And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart***" (Acts 2:46).

We must understand that even in these connections there were problems that arose (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 8:1ff, et al.), but those problems were handled properly, and unity resulted. In the world, connections are severed daily because the world has no real idea about relationships and connections. However, thanks be to God and His Word because the church of Christ is all about **connections!**

Thirdly, the church of Christ is all about **expansion**. God's plan for the church was never to be stagnant or self-absorbed! The divine marching orders from the beginning were to go "***make disciples***" (Matthew 28:19-20), which involves "***teaching,***" "***baptizing***" and teaching some more. This expansion plan was so great that God demanded the whole world be our ***mission field*** (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). It is easy for humans to fall into the *keeping house mentality*, and sadly some brethren in various places do just that. The church that truly belongs to Jesus is **outwardly** not inwardly focused! **The church is soul obsessed and not self-obsessed.** It is not as much focused on programs as it is focused on people! I am always so encouraged when I read and study the book of Acts and see the growth the church of Christ

THE CHURCH

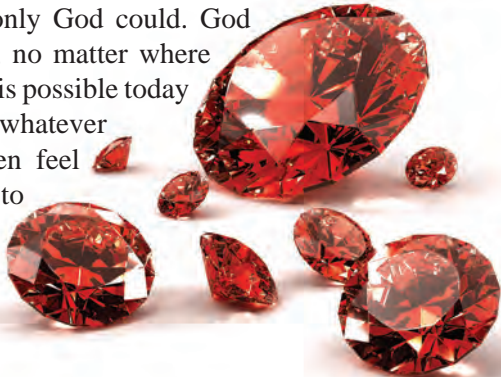
experienced even amid a sin-filled, problematic society. Their main goal was to tell the narrative that changed their lives forevermore. The church of Christ is all about **expansion!**

It is a blessed and a wonderful privilege to be a member of the church that Jesus bought with His lifeblood! While no congregation or individual is perfect in the church, we serve and laud a perfect Savior. We have been liberated from sin, and we have been brought together in the body to go and tell everyone what Jesus has done. From before the dawn of time, the church of Christ was in God's mind (Ephesians 3:10-11). Let us rejoice exceedingly that you and I are members of the church of Christ, the unshakable kingdom of our dear King (Hebrews 12:28)! **✝**

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of Gospel Gazette Online magazine. He resides in Beavertown, Pennsylvania, USA.

Robison's Rabies

The Old Testament prophet Amos said to the ancient people of Israel, *“Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria...”* (Amos 6:1). It seems that the people felt like since they were well-off materially, the religious structures of the Temple compound in the land God promised them and that nothing bad could happen to them. They were at ease. They trusted in a land and in a place to protect them when only God could. God wanted their obedience, no matter where they lived. I wonder if it is possible today for people to behave in whatever way they want and then feel religiously pleasing to God just by going to a certain place? God says to such people, *“Woe to you.”*

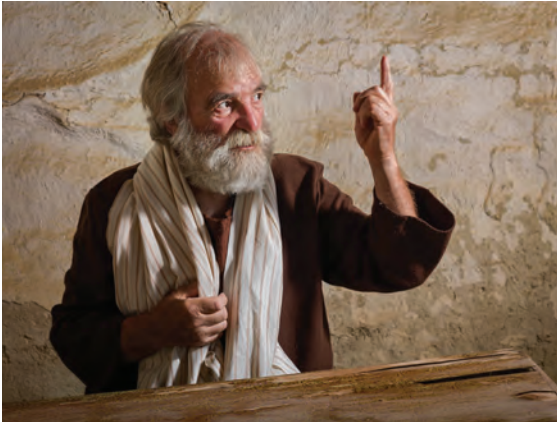


THE CHURCH

Don't Preach to Me


Cecil May, Jr.

Preaching gets a bad rap in the population at large. Along with product advertising and political speech, except for those who already believe, people typically listen to preaching with suspicion or just disregard it altogether. Some of the negative attitudes toward preaching are well-founded (e.g., reactions to some television evangelists).



Some preachers counter negative reaction to preaching by trying to sound like they are not preaching. Instead of proclamation or exhortation and rebuke, they share reflections and musings. This is *weak preaching* of the wrong sort. The apostle Paul's preaching "*in weakness and fear*"

was a renunciation of rhetorical eloquence ("lofty speech") and theological speculation ("wisdom"). It was a simple, straightforward proclamation of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised!

Rejected as a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, the preaching of the cross is nevertheless declared to be both the power and wisdom of God. "*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). 

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

THE CHURCH

The Kingdom of God Is within You



Robert Johnson

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed,

the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). Jesus’ ministry was characterized by His preaching about the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; Matthew 6:33; 12:28; 16:19). There was no doubt that when He mentioned His coming kingdom that it piqued interest in those who heard, including His disciples and the Pharisees as well. Most likely, Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom brought about questions regarding what they thought would be true of His Messianic reign. They were anticipating a Messiah who would deliver them from their enemies, provide them with whatever needs they had and always reign over Israel as His earthly kingdom. Clearly, if they had been listening to Jesus, they would know these were misconceptions about His kingdom and His work. So, just what is this kingdom?


Jesus made it clear His kingdom is unlike any earthly kingdom with which the Pharisees or His disciples were familiar. **It was not a physical kingdom but spiritual in nature.** Jesus told Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). It was neither to have an earthly palace from which He would reign nor a militia of soldiers to use physical weaponry to defend its borders. Paul penned, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the*

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heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). For those who were following Jesus and seeking to live by His precepts, the kingdom could be seen in Christ, in His teaching and in what He offered those who came to Him. For those who in faith obeyed His will, the kingdom is *“in their midst”* or *“within you.”* **Being part of God’s kingdom is a frame of mind, an attitude of heart, which is within us and a part of who we are.**

The Pharisees needed to ask themselves what they believed about Christ and what His works meant to them. Could they recognize the power of God at work in Jesus? Were they willing to let go of their traditions to follow Him? Could they believe Him as truly being Lord? Would they humble themselves and submit to His will for their lives? Most of them refused to do so, and between their envy, their hatred and their hardheartedness, they were willing to send Him to the cross instead of finding life in Him.

It is no different for people today. To look for a church building to find the kingdom is misguided, as if its ornaments and beauty were the kingdom. It is misdirected to think the kingdom is something that caters to one’s whims. The standards of wealth and status don’t apply for Christ’s kingdom, but being poor in spirit matters more (Matthew 5:3). This can be seen in the pierced hearts of the crowd in Acts 2 when it asked what to do and responded genuinely in repenting and being immersed (Acts 2:37-38). It can be seen in Lydia, who allowed the Word to penetrate her heart, leading her to respond to that message (Acts 16:14-15). It’s seen in Thessalonica in those who turned from idols to worship and serve the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

We, too, can show the effects of being part of the kingdom of God. How will others respond to our message and to whom we’ve become in Christ? Some may be hardened and reject the Gospel, while others may see its beauty and truth to respond obediently. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16), and its power works within to transform us (Romans 12:2). Is the kingdom for which Christ died a part of who you are? *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:13-14). 

Robert Johnson preaches for the Lord’s church in Longview, Texas, USA.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Word of God

Paula Bates

1. The _____ withers, and the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand _____. Isaiah 40:8
2. But the word of the _____ endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is _____ unto you. 1 Peter 1:25
3. But he answered and said, Man shall not live by _____ alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the _____ of God. Matthew 4:4
4. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my _____ shall not pass away. Matthew 24:35
5. Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; _____, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and _____. 2 Timothy 4:2
6. Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, whom shall we go? You have the words of _____ life. And we _____ and are sure that thou are that _____, the Son of the living God. John 6:68-69



-
- Answers:**
1. Grass, forever
 2. Lord, preached
 3. Bread, mouth
 4. Words
 5. Reprove, doctrine
 6. Eternal, believe, Christ

Are Mechanical Instruments of Music in Christian Worship Approved by the Bible?

Colin McKee

This question has two possible answers: first, it may be answered, “Yes,” or secondly, it may be answered, “No.” How do we determine which answer is correct, which is right? The answer must be sought and taken from the Bible, not from man, because the Bible is the sole authority for the Christian religion. What do men say? What does the Bible say? Let us examine some of the reasons given by men to justify the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.

1. **According to the opinion of some**, since instruments were used in praise and worship in the Old Testament, under the Mosaic Law, therefore that practice was acceptable to God at that time. They reason that if God accepted them then, surely He will still accept their use in worship today. It is further argued that David, Solomon and others used various instruments at times in worship, and since God is still the same God that He was then, the use of instruments in worship must be acceptable to Him.
2. **Some have the opinion** that the Greek word, *psallo/πσάλλω*, includes, and thus authorizes, the use of instruments in worship. Christians are commanded to *psallontes* (in Greek) (Ephesians 5:19) in their singing, so according to their reasoning, the use of instruments is acceptable and pleasing to God.
3. **Some teach** that instruments of music were used in worship in Heaven (Revelation 14:2-3), and since they were allowed in Heaven, we may use them in the worship of the church on earth.
4. **Others teach** that since almost all of the so-called “Christian” denomina-

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tions use mechanical instruments in their worship, and have done so for a long time, we are free to use them now also. They ask how is it possible that so many could be wrong about this for hundreds of years without becoming aware of it, if the practice is not right? According to them, since scholars and great minds in various faiths have used, promoted and defended the traditional use of instruments in Christian worship, surely not all of those brilliant scholars would have come to the wrong conclusion.

5. **Others say** that mechanical instruments help in keeping singers in tune to the melody and notes, plus they help people to sing better and more melodiously so that the singing is not off-key.
6. **Still others say** that it is not written in the Bible that we are forbidden to use instruments in worship, and thus according to them, if it is not forbidden, we are allowed to use them in worship.
7. **Some people teach** that God expects us to use our talents for His glory, and if someone has the talent to play instruments, God wants him to use that talent to praise Him in Christian worship.

Responses to the Reasons Listed Above

Man is not the one who determines the method of worship that is acceptable to God; rather **it is God Himself who determines – through His Word – the method of worship that pleases Him.** All practices of Christian worship must be based on God’s Word because He has never received or approved of just any kind of worship. He refused Cain’s offering because it was not *“by faith”* (Hebrews 11:4), that is, it was not according to what God had specified. He punished Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10) because they burned incense with fire that was unauthorized. When Moses acted on his own will and struck the rock to give water to the people of Israel, he acted outside of the authority or will of God, and because of that, he was not allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 20:12). Jesus pointed out that those who worship according to the teaching of man make their worship vain (Matthew 15:8-9).

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- 1. Response to # 1.** We today live under the New Testament law, not the Old Testament law. Our worship practices under the New Testament cannot be justified by laws or practices of the Old Testament/Law of Moses. Sanctifying the Sabbath, animal sacrifices, burning incense, prohibitions regarding certain meats, and many other practices were required under the Old Testament, but we live under the law of the New Testament or Covenant. Therefore, we must regulate every practice of worship according to the guidelines given in the New Testament (Colossians 2:14-16). It is true that instruments were used at times in worship in the Old Testament (2 Chronicles 7:6), but they are conspicuously absent in the worship of the New Testament church. Why would God allow them in the Old Testament but not allow them in the New Testament church? Why would God *allow*, even *command* animal sacrifices, incense and Sabbath keeping under the Old Law but not permit such in the New Testament? Why would God overlook polygamy in the Old Testament when it was not His intended will? Most Bible believers would say that animal sacrifices, incense burning, Sabbath keeping and polygamy are not approved under Christ's New Testament law because they recognize the truth that the Old has been nailed to the cross. However, many want to allow the instrument because they find it in use in worship in the Old Testament. Why did God decide to change the law? Only He knows, but the Old Law was never intended to be permanent but only to serve as a regulator for Israel until Christ came (Galatians 3:19). Why did God not authorize instruments in N.T. worship? We can't answer "Why," but we can answer that He **did not authorize** them, and hence, they are disallowed and prohibited by the command to "***sing and make melody in your hearts***" (Ephesians 5:19).
- 2. Response to # 2.** The Greek word *psallo*/ψαλλω changed meaning over the centuries, and by New Testament times, it meant only to sing. Everett Ferguson, a New Testament and Greek language scholar explains, "The instrument did not inhere in the word *psallo* in the Septuagint ..." "Historical evidence makes it unlikely that an instrument can be found

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in *psallo* in the N.T. and shows that the absence of any clear reference to instrumental music in the church's worship in early days was not accidental. It was not mentioned because it was not there. There is no time when one can point to an original use of instruments in the church being abandoned" (Everett Ferguson. *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church*. 4th ed. Abilene: Desert Willow P., 2013; 7, 81).

- 3. Response to # 3.** Some people teach that instruments of music are found and used in worship in Heaven according to the book of Revelation. Revelation contains many figurative and symbolic words, and we must logically understand the meaning in keeping with the context and other Bible passages. Are horses, dragons, sheep, locusts, etc. literally found in Heaven, a spiritual place? In Revelation 5:8, John saw a harp and a golden bowl that represents the prayers of the saints. Is the golden bowl figurative and the harp literal, in the same verse of the same vision? Certainly not. Both are figurative. If it could be proven that the harp is literal, that would still not prove that its use is approved in Christian worship in the church today. We are only permitted to use what is in accordance with the instructions of the New Testament, not whatever we think or feel is acceptable. In Revelation 8:3-4, an angel offers much incense in worship to God. Does that, then, authorize us to burn incense to God in Christian worship? If the harps in chapters 5, 14 and 15 authorize us to use them in worship, then by the same reasoning, Revelation 8 authorizes the burning of incense to God in our worship, because it is found in Heaven in the vision of John in Revelation. Neither is justified or allowed, however, by New Testament instructions for the church.
- 4. Response to # 4.** Numbers, or a majority of people following a particular practice, do not authorize what we do in worship. The traditions of men very often run counter to the Word of God. The majority often follows the path that leads in the wrong direction and on which we cannot depend for assurance of what is acceptable to God (Matthew 7:13-14). Instruments of music were not used in Christian worship

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for several hundred years after Christ established His church in the first century. Many historians state that an organ was first used in the 800s A.D. Some say it was introduced around A.D. 600. The introduction of instruments into worship was strongly resisted and controversy raged for a long time before it was generally accepted by the majority of worshippers. The Greek Orthodox Church still does not use instruments in worship. Instruments were brought into worship not because the Bible authorizes them but because many people like the sound. Personal satisfaction is elevated above the Word of God.

5. **Response to # 5.** It is not a matter of something aiding us to worship but rather what is commanded in the Word of God. **There is a big difference between an acceptable aid and an unacceptable addition.** We are forbidden to add to or take away from the Word of the Lord (Revelation 22:18-19). For example, a songbook is an **aid** to singing. It neither changes the music or the melody nor adds another dimension to singing. Singing while using a songbook or a slide on a screen is still only singing. If a teacher uses a microphone, the content of his lesson is not changed or modified by the microphone. Using a tray to pass the bread and the cups in the Lord's supper neither changes the nature of the supper nor its elements. If chocolate were spread on the bread, that would be an addition which changes the nature of the elements of the supper, but additions are not approved by the Word of God. The addition of mechanical instruments to the singing service changes the nature of what is being done, making two kinds of music, whereas what is commanded and authorized by the Word of God is only vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). **[Editor's Note:** Furthermore, "singing" is a very specific type of vocal expression, which does not authorize, for instance, humming, whistling or mimicking instruments of music. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]
6. **Response to # 6.** Things not allowed by God are not only forbidden, but whatever is outside of the positive principles of His truth is not allowed. When Christ sent out His apostles, He authorized them to preach

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the Gospel, which included belief and baptism (Mark 16:15-16). He did not need to forbid them to preach their opinions, news of the business world, the philosophies of men, football news, weather forecasts, etc. They were sent and authorized to preach the Gospel, and anything else would have been unacceptable. When Naaman was told by the prophet to wash seven times in the Jordan River, (2 Kings 5), the leper wanted to substitute rivers back home. Yet, Elisha didn't have to name all the other bodies of water in that area and say, "Don't dip in any of them." Only the river Jordan was authorized by the prophet's words. All other rivers were excluded, based on the specific positive command.

There are eight references to singing or songs in the New Testament, outside of the book of Revelation. It is evident from all of these (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13) that only vocal music is under consideration. There is no hint of mechanical instruments. The New Testament is silent about instruments in Christian worship because they just weren't used.

- 7. Response to # 7.** God gave men the talent and the innate capacity to develop various skills. No one automatically knows how to play an instrument. Anyone must study and train himself in order to master an instrument. Of course, some have the capacity to excel more than others. Yet, simply because someone has a developed talent to play an instrument does not mean he or she, therefore, is authorized or compelled to use it in the worship of the church. For example, Mr. X can play a piano beautifully, but just having the ability does not authorize him to use that in worship to God. Maria can cook delicious cakes, but her cakes are not allowed to be used in the Lord's Supper. Katy has a special talent to make tea, but her tea is not permitted in the Lord's Supper on Sunday. Joko is an accomplished dancer, but he is not authorized to dance as a part of the worship to the Lord. Irrespective of whatever one's talents or abilities may be, it remains true that the

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things which are acceptable in worship to the Lord are only the things commanded in His Word. **We must practice only what is written in the Word of the Lord.** Our talents should be used to glorify God and not to support or promote sinful practices, but special abilities authorize nothing in worship. **Only the stipulations in God's Word give us authority for what we do in worship.** Paul gave inspired advice to the church at Corinth that still holds true today, *“not to think beyond what is written”* (1 Corinthians 4:6).

If our God had not clarified how we are to worship Him, then we may worship any way we choose. However, because God has revealed and commanded the manner of worship that is acceptable to Him, and regulated it through His Word, **we must submit to and follow the guidelines written in the New Testament portion of the Bible.** Only in that way can we be sure that our worship is in accordance with the will of our Heavenly Father.✝

Colin McKee has been involved in mission work in Indonesia for many years. He resides in Hayden, Alabama, USA.



Robison's Rubies

Speaking to people in the first century, Jesus said, *“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”* (Mark 9:1 NKJV). After Jesus' death

and resurrection, Paul claimed some people had been *“conveyed... into the kingdom of the Son of His love”* (Colossians 1:13). That's right, the kingdom was in existence in the first century and had people in it. Further, Jesus said His kingdom was *“not of this world”* (John 18:36) but *“within you”* (Luke 17:21). In Matthew 16:18-19, He used the terms *“church”* and *“kingdom”* interchangeably. The church is not an afterthought; it is the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Further, Jesus has been reigning as its King for almost 2,000 years now!

An Open Letter from a Father

Cliff Holmes

An Open Letter from a Father to His Children and Grandchildren

“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them...” (Psalm 127:3-5 NKJV). We are heirs of the Lord, and children are our heritage. They are a gift we are given because we are so fortunate to belong to the Lord, not because we have done any hard work to acquire them.

One of the ways God can bless us is by giving us children. It matters not how the children come to us, by birth or by adoption; each child is a gift. Whether by adoption or by the melding of a blended family, they are truly family and, as such, a part of our heritage.

My entire family is my heritage from the Lord. I am a man so blessed and so happy that my family is full of sons, daughters, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. I have a family of children, grandchildren and a conglomerate of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins. I am so thankful for my wonderful family who are truly, as the Psalmist said, a heritage from the Lord.

Through the years, it has been my prayer that I have given you words of wisdom, enlightenment and encouragement. In my own small way, I hope that I have shown you a light on the path of life that leads us to our home in Heaven when life here is done. May my blessing be upon all of you. ✝

Cliff Holmes has served variously over the years as a minister, a deacon and a song leader. He resides in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

Kenney’s Pennies

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV). Be anxious for nothing? That is a whole lot easier said than done, which is one reason why we pray!

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

A SPIRITUAL LIFE

Jay Jones

Jesus said, ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”*** (Matthew 6:33 NKJV). He was speaking about food, clothing and such like. Just before that in verses 19-20, our Lord said, ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** Luke 12:15 records Jesus saying, ***“...For one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”*** The apostle Paul wrote, ***“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition”*** (1 Timothy 6:7-9).

Many years ago, I saw a man on a television show making a confession. He said, “All my life has been devoted to making money. In doing so, I have lost all my friends and most of my family. Here I stand in my late eighties not far from standing before the Lord in Judgment, and I am spiritually destitute.” Jesus told the rich young ruler, ***“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”*** (Matthew 19:21). Jesus told His apostles, ***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:16).

We educate our children so they can make all the money they can and buy all the things they want. Our Lord Himself showed us the relative importance of **things**; He didn’t own anything. The happiest people in our world are those who live their lives in service to God, glorifying Him in and through the way they live. If you love your children, set them down at a young age and tell them that you are going to educate them so they can make a comfortable living


THE CHRISTIAN HOME

and enjoy the comforts of life, but first teach them about God. Tell them, “I want you to learn how God created you.”

Tell them how sin came into the world through Adam and Eve. However, let your children know that God devised a plan so that when our physical bodies die, our spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:44) can live with Him forever. Make sure that your children understand that God sent



His Son from Heaven to be born of a woman. Tell your children that Jesus Christ preached and taught for about 33 years before He allowed Himself to be our sacrifice on a cross. Impress upon them that He shed His blood as a sacrifice so that we can all have forgiveness of our sins.

Further, relate to your children that Jesus Christ left us His Word to direct us; the New Testament is our roadmap to Heaven. Have them study it every day of their lives. Tell your children that you want them to be faithful servants as long as they live, glorifying our Lord through the way they live. Let them know that is the only way to achieve true happiness and contentment – a spiritual life. 

Jay Jones lives in Olive Branch, Mississippi, USA.

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HYMNS

O Lord, God of All

II Kings 19:15-19

Paul Clements, 2020

Arr. Paul Clements, 2020

O Lord, God of all; You are God and you a - lone.

We lift our hands to you in prayer and supp - li - ca - tion.

In - cline your ears and hear us; O - pen your eyes and see.

O Lord our God, we pray to you to save us by your hand.

rit.
A - men, A - men.

HYMNS

The First Day of the Week

Words and Music
by: Paul Mays

1.It's the first day of the week,
2.It's the first day of the week,
3.It's the first day of the week,
4.It's the first day of the week,
First day of the week,

We've come to - geth - er to break the bread.
We've come to - geth - er to drink the cup.
We've come to - geth - er in earn - est prayer.
We've come to - geth - er to praise His name.

We're re - mem - ber - ing, the death of Je - sus till He comes a - gain.
We're re - mem - ber - ing, the blood of Je - sus He was lift - ed up.
We're re - mem - ber - ing, the cru - el taunt - ing that our Lord did bear.
We're re - mem - ber - ing, to 'xam - ine our lives and disc - ern His death.

We're re - mem - ber - ing,

He suff - ered and He died on the cross. Our gain on - ly comes
The thorn - y crown was pressed in His brow. He did not pro - test,
They spat u - pon His face, cursed in His name. It's there He was scourged,
We must be care - ful and fo - cus well, On His love as He

4th verse ♪

from His loss. My Je - sus, He was will - ing and He died.
Je - sus bowed. My Je - sus, He was will - ing and He died.
suff - ered shame. My Je - sus, He was will - ing and He died.
took the nails. My Je - sus He was will - ing and He

♪ CODA

died, for my sin. A - - - men

Paul Mays is a Christian hymn writer who resides in Roanoke, Virginia, USA. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/neanderpaul> to listen to the hymns.

The Value of a Touch

Wayne Burger

In Mark and Debra Laaser's book, *Seven Desires of Every Heart*, they discuss each of the seven basic desires or needs a person has. One of those needs is to be touched. That sounds like such a simple fact that we do not realize it is so vital, but those who study human needs verify that truth.

The Value of Touching

The Handbook of Touch: Neuroscience, Behavioral, and Health Perspective by Dale M. Stack, Ph.D., and Amelie D.L. Jean gives the following information. "Of the five senses, touch is developed first and informs self-awareness... When humans come in close contact with one another, even in minor ways, the hormone oxytocin is released. This hormone responds to nerve stimulation by activating a feeling of wellbeing and stress relief. It also helps individuals let their defenses down and open up to the possibility of trusting another person."

Touch stimulates the vagus nerve, which has branches running through one's entire body. "The nerve's primary role is to slow the nervous system," says Tiffany Field, Ph.D., the director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. "As a result, your heart rate goes down, your blood pressure drops, and your stress-hormone levels fall."

The Value of Touching Children

In their book chapter, "Communicating through Touch: Touching During Parent-Infant Interactions," Dale M. Stack, Ph.D. and Amelie D.L. Jean discuss the sensitivities of the human embryo. "At as early as 26 weeks, fetuses have responded to vibrations felt within the womb. Physical contact helps newborns regulate their body temperature and contributes to their ability to regulate their emotions. Babies smiled and uttered sounds more frequently when stroked instead of being tickled or poked. The psychological health and physical growth of children is dependent upon human touch." Much more could be said about how important it is for parents to touch, cuddle and handle their young children.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

The Value of Touching the Elderly

In the book, *Aging Our Way*, by Meika Loe, Ph.D., his interviews revealed that “human touch is as important to the personal development of elders, aged 85 and older, as it is to newborns. Human touch helps the aging population to feel connected, acknowledged and valued. They rely on human touch for survival and their overall wellbeing.” This was one of the greatest problems due to the quarantine regulations during the pandemic. Our elderly are dying for lack of being touched.



A Good Summary

Here is a good summary that is stated by many sources: **Touch strengthens one’s immune system, improves sleep, reduces stress and ramps up the body’s production of its natural painkillers.**

The Problem

Despite all the healthy upsides, Field has discovered that people are

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

actually touching one another less today than ever before. “We interact more on social media than in person. When you’re out, you’re often listening to music or checking your phone, so there’s less of a chance for contact with strangers or even friends,” she says. “That means we’re missing out on all the mind-body advantages.”

Biblical Examples of Touching


Jesus’ Examples: You might be surprised as you turn through the pages of the Gospel accounts to see how many times Jesus touched people. Why did He do that? He did not have to in order to heal. Jesus touched little children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13). He touched those who had leprosy (Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13). Those with leprosy had not been touched in years! He touched Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15). He touched those who were blind and those who could not hear (Matthew 9:29; 20:34; Mark 7:33). One of the most interesting accounts is when the disciples who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they were afraid; He touched them and told them not to be afraid (Matthew 17:6-7). Not only did Jesus touch people, but often they touched Him, such as the sinful woman in Luke 7:39. As the disciples gathered to eat the Passover, one leaned against the breast of Jesus as others leaned against one another. That was true when they ate any meal because they ate in a reclined position, rather than sitting in chairs as we do (John 19:23ff).

The Early Church: That society, like many societies today, greeted one another with a kiss on the cheek. The New Testament writers called it a “Holy Kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). They also greeted one another with a handshake (Galatians 2:9). They touched one another through ceremonial ‘laying-on-of-hands.’ Not only was this for the purpose of pronouncing a blessing or letting the one on whom hands were laid know that they were with them, but it would also accomplish the benefits described in the paragraphs in the first part of this article. The church at Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas when they sent them out on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Timothy was instructed to lay hands on elders when they were appointed to that position (1 Timothy 5:22).

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING


Application

All the benefits described in the first few paragraphs are still needed in our time. Those touches still produce those results in us today. As the body of Christ on earth, we need to do as Jesus did and reach out and touch others. We are family! We need to express our feelings for one another through those valuable touches. However, more than just touching those of like-mind, we need to be people who will reach out and touch those who are rejected by society. If Jesus would touch sinners and those with contagious diseases such as lepers, we need to let those whom others reject know that we accept them. It may have been a long time since they have been touched with that kind of meaningful message.

Let's especially remember those who are elderly. By our touch we can assure them that they are valuable and loved. How much good could we do if we made it a practice to go into the nursing homes and homes for the elderly and give those individuals a hug? Let's remember the value in touching those of all ages and those in all kinds of physical conditions. Those touches can do more than what we might say to them. 

Wayne Burger has been preaching since 1962. He is currently a teacher at Bear Valley Bible Institute and also preaches for the church in Conifer, Colorado, USA.

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God and Nations

Wayne Barrier

The United States has enjoyed over two centuries of freedom, prosperity and quality conditions for living. There have been difficult times but never times without hope, opportunity and freedom to improve conditions. Most Americans today have never experienced anything other than national prosperity. Current trends seem to indicate a degradation of the American quality of life. Crime rates have soared to the highest levels in the nation's history. The Covid-19 pandemic has infected millions, and the medical system of the nation has responded with conflicting guidance that has proven to be marginally effective at best. The cost of living is rising at the most rapid rate in over 40 years. Educational systems are producing graduates that are making some of the lowest scores in the Western World in fundamental areas of civics, language, math and science. Graduates don't know how our government, economy, legal system and social order operate.


Could there be a connection between our problems and our response to our Creator? Polls indicate the highest level of indifference to Bible based morals, beliefs and obedience in our history. Does the Bible provide answers to our nation's downward slide? Maybe!

First, consider the words recorded in Proverbs 14:34, ***“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people”*** (NKJV). Our place as a nation is changing from exalted to sin-plagued, weak and wicked.

Next, consider the words of the Lord to Solomon regarding Israel as recorded in 2 Chronicles 7:14-15. ***“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.”*** This passage seems to say that God's people (those obedient and called by His name) have a great impact on the conditions of their land (nation).

Those who rule our land are in their positions with God's approval.

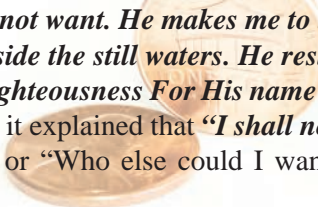
DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Romans 13:1 states, *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”* We will have rulers who rule well and address our needs when our wants and needs are consistent with God’s will (Romans 13:2-4). A favorable situation seems to require righteousness, faithfulness and prayer by the children of God, especially now in view of widespread abandonment of God and His Holy Word – the Bible. 

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA and does mission work in several countries.

Kenney's Pennies

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.” (Psalm 23:1-3 NKJV). I have heard it explained that *“I shall not want”* means “What else could I want?” or “Who else could I want?” Two wonderful thoughts!



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Woe Is Unto Me

Angela Chapman

Woe is unto me if I proclaim not His name,
If, of Him, I am ashamed.

Woe is unto me if I share not His Word,
If the Gospel, from me, is unheard.

Woe is unto me if I don't value souls,
If His truth I don't sow.

Woe is unto me if Him, I don't obey,
If any sin, to me, is ever okay.


Woe is unto me if my cross I don't bear,
If I'm caught in Satan's snare.

Woe is unto me if I'm ever lukewarm,
If of spiritual danger, I don't warn.

Woe is unto me if from Him I turn away,
How then will I be ready for that great day?

Woe is unto me if I ever fall from grace,
Don't endure this faith race.

Woe is unto me if Him I don't serve,
Don't give Him the love He deserves.

Don't let it be woe is unto me.
So, share the Gospel as often as I can,
And through faithfulness reach that Promised Land. 

Angela Chapman resides in San Augustine, Texas, USA.

Cries!

Betty Burton Choate

In the village of Mulvana in southern India, dusk settled over the slow-plodding water buffalo and the tired farmers. The smell of boiling rice began to drift up from the open courtyards of the thatched huts. Children left their play and ran home in answer to their mothers' calls. However, one mother listened in vain for the flying feet of her little six-year-old boy. Her loudest call brought no answer in the familiar shrill voice that she waited expectantly to hear. With a mother's tired disgust over childish pranks, she went to look for the naughty boy. One after the other she searched in all of his usual hiding places, but each one was empty. No one had seen her boy, and no one knew where he might be.

Finally, there was no place left to look except the temple of Durga, the Hindu "mother goddess." With her red tongue lolled out of her blue face and her necklace of ghastly heads of men, she looked more like a demon than a goddess, but because people feared her power, she had many worshippers in the village and throughout the country. The priest of this particular temple was a near relation, so the worried mother hurried to the temple, expecting to find the boy hiding there as a fine joke on his mother. To her surprise, the priest would not even allow her to go inside the temple.

More worried than ever, the anxious woman went home, telling her neighbors that she could not find her son anywhere and that the priest would not open the temple doors so she could search there for him.

Uneasy with suspicion, the neighbors went en masse to the temple and forced the doors open, over the loud protests of the priest. A sickening sight met their eyes: Durga had been freshly bathed in blood, and blood covered the altar of sacrifice.

The police discovered a newly planted banana sapling and, digging into the soft earth, they found the body of the missing boy. The priest had made a sacrifice to propitiate an angry goddess, beheading the boy with an axe and pouring his blood over her hideous body.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION


This news report appeared in *The Times of India*, New Delhi, India, on May 30, 1973.

Google “Human Sacrifice” and you will find numerous articles which show that such sacrifices are still being made to the “gods” in India, Africa and other parts of the world. The following quote is one example:

“Human sacrifice is far more common in countries like India where a minority of tantric shamans still promote it to gullible communities of uneducated peasants.” “Best known in the West as techniques to prolong and intensify sexual pleasure, in remote areas, tantric rituals loosely derived from the Hindu faith can also include animal, and, in extreme cases, human sacrifice to please the gods and guarantee good luck.” “It is so widespread that in 2006 there were 28 cases of human sacrifice in just four months in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh.”

Sometimes Christians want to believe that God will not condemn those who live in ignorance of Him. Further, it is often said that people of other religions seem as happy, contented and as peaceable as Christians. I would ask of these some questions:

1. Was it internal peace that demanded human blood for the appeasement of a goddess’ anger?
2. Is it happiness that this lonely mother will feel for the rest of her life when she thinks of her little boy?
3. Will contentment come to those who are still in ignorance of the only sacrifice that can ever cleanse sins?

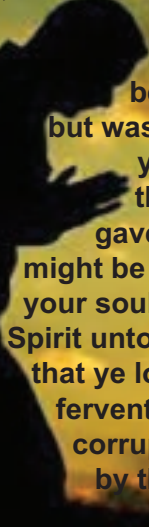
In this world, there are more Mulvanas than you would ever imagine, and most of them have never heard of our Lord’s sacrifice and the salvation He offers. Their people live in fear, slaves to evil superstitions. Do you want the story of this mother and her son to be repeated again and again in ignorance? Are you doing anything to prevent it? The power of God is in His Word, and that is in your hands. The road to Mulvana begins in your heart, at your door. ***No one heard a little boy’s helpless cries. Who will hear the cries of the worshippers of Durga throughout eternity?*** 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of *The Voice of Truth International*. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

How Do You Measure Up?

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of

A silhouette of a person in a prayerful posture, with hands clasped and head bowed, set against a dramatic sunset or sunrise sky with orange and yellow clouds. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking towards the right.

a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

1 Peter 1:13-23

Questions from the Beginning

Hiram Kemp

The Bible is a book full of answers. **The Bible furnishes us with everything we need for life and godliness** (2 Peter 1:3). However, the Bible is also a book filled with questions. Sometimes there are questions asked by those who feel as if God deserted them (Psalm 10:1). God had a host of questions from Job when He appeared out of the whirlwind after Job complained about His absence (Job 38:1-3). The Pharisees had questions for Jesus, and Jesus had questions for them that they would not answer (Matthew 21:23-27).

The Book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. The word Genesis means beginning. As we open our Bibles to the first book in the Bible, we read of the beginning of the world, the beginning of God's fellowship with man, the beginning of sin and the beginning of questions. There are several important questions asked in the first few chapters of Genesis that still need to be answered today.

Where Are You?

After Adam and Eve sinned and disobeyed God, He confronted them in the Garden (Genesis 3:1-6). God came to them, but He was not welcomed by Adam and Eve. Instead, they hid from Him as their guilt consumed them (Genesis 3:7-8). God asked Adam, **"Where are you?"** God was not asking Adam where he was because He could not find him. God created the Garden and all of its intricacies (Genesis 1:31). God knows everything and does not need anyone to teach Him anything (Romans 11:33-36). So, why did He ask Adam where he was? He wanted Adam to examine himself and see what he had allowed sin to do to him and to his relationship with God. Adam who had once enjoyed genuine and uninterrupted fellowship with God hid in shame from his Maker.

This question is important and still needs to be answered today. Each individual should take careful consideration of where he stands spiritually. Are you in Christ where all spiritual blessings are present (Ephesians 1:3)?

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Are you walking in the light with Jesus and being cleansed by His blood (1 John 1:7)? Are you in the church that Jesus is coming back to save (Ephesians 5:23)? Are you involved in works of the flesh that will keep you from the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21)? **The question of where we are does not relate to our geographic location. Instead, it relates to our spiritual location.** Are we on the Lord's side or on the side of the devil (Exodus 32:26)? Adam was ashamed of what he had done and where it placed him. He claimed that he was afraid, and his fear was no doubt caused by his sinful actions (Genesis 3:10). If this question causes fear in our hearts, we can repent, realign our lives and leave fear behind. God wants us where He is, and this happens as we reorient our lives to have them shaped by His Word.

Who Told You That?

The second question that God asked Adam was, *“Who told you that you were naked?”* (Genesis 3:11). God was getting at the heart of Adam's disobedience and trying to get him to see that the reason he realized he was naked was because he sinned. Adam had been naked his entire life up to this point, and it never bothered him, but now he was ashamed of it. Adam was not getting his information from God. He was getting his information from himself and trying to maneuver in the way that he thought was best.

Today in religion there is a lot of information being passed around. Many never stop to consider who is telling them the things they are believing. Paul was disappointed in the churches of Galatia as they were being moved away from the true Gospel due to the influence of false teachers (Galatians 1:6-9). Paul asked them who bewitched them (Galatians 3:1). He wanted to know if they received the Spirit by the hearing of faith or by the works of the law (Galatians 3:2). Paul asked them how they began in the Spirit and now were trying to be made perfect through the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:3). Through these questions, Paul hoped to get those Christians to see their inconsistency.

We might ask similar questions concerning some issues that come up in our own day. Who told you that you can drink as long as you don't get drunk (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8; 1 Peter 4:1-4)? Who told you that one church was as good as another (Matthew 16:18-19; Ephesians

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4:4)? Who told you that evening worship and Wednesday night services were optional (Hebrews 10:25)? Who told you that as long as your heart is in it, God doesn't care how you worship (Matthew 15:7-9; John 4:23-24)? There are many more questions that we could ask here. Nevertheless, the point is that we should consult the Word of God and not the words of men.

Have You Disobeyed God?

God asked Adam if he had eaten of the tree from which He told him not to eat (Genesis 3:11; 2:16-17). God simply asked Eve, “*What have you done?*” (Genesis 3:13). God did all that He could to get Adam and Eve to admit their wrongdoing, but they failed to do so. They shifted the blame toward one another and eventually to the serpent. God knew that they disobeyed, and He laid out their punishment. The world is forever changed because of their disobedience (Romans 5:12). They were evicted from the Garden, and they would die (Genesis 3:22-24; 5:5). All of this happened because they disobeyed God.

While every hardship in our lives is not a direct correlation to our disobedience, sometimes we suffer because we are disobeying God. King Saul learned the hard way that to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Our love of God is seen when we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3-5; 5:3). When we are in uncomfortable circumstances, we should ask if the reason we are in the particular position is because we have disobeyed God. Every act of disobedience comes with a price tag. We will not be sinless, but we can make wise decisions. We need to look inwardly to be sure that our disobedience has not complicated our lives.

Where Is Your Brother?

Cain killed his brother Abel because his works were evil, and his brother's works were righteous (Genesis 4:1-7; 1 John 3:12). God appeared to Cain and asked him, “*Where... is your brother?*” (Genesis 4:9). Cain avoided the question and shirked his responsibility to his brother. Abel's blood was crying from the ground, and Cain's nonchalant attitude could not silence it (Genesis 4:10).

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Where is our brother? Where is our sister? We should be sure that if they have strayed from the Lord, we are working to bring them back (James 5:19-20). If they are struggling and overtaken in a fault, we should be helping them to overcome (Galatians 6:1-2). If they are rejoicing, we should rejoice as well (Romans 12:15). If our brother or sister is suffering, we should experience their suffering with them (1 Corinthians 12:26). God wants us to be our brother's keeper and to be concerned about where they stand. This was true for the first set of brothers, and it is also true for us today.

Conclusion

The Book of Genesis gives us a lot of answers. The first few chapters have eternal questions that the rest of the Bible helps us answer. God often teaches us today through questions, if we read His Word closely enough. The Bible is a book of questions, and it is also a book of answers. †

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Cecil's

COMMENTS

The Incarnation: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14 NKJV). He was *“Immanuel... God with Us”* (Matthew 1:23). He is *“Son of God”* (Matthew 8:29) and *“Son of Man”* (Matthew 8:20) by virtue of the virgin birth, conceived in Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit – God in the flesh even in infancy. There is an old song that says, in part, *“the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay,”* and a new song says, *“Fulness of God in helpless babe.”*



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Same Name, Different Results

Rebecca Rushmore

The Book of Acts tells of two men who have the same name. One of the men tried to make others think he was a great servant of the Lord. In reality, he was a liar. The other man answered the call of the Lord even though he was afraid. Who are these men? Both are named Ananias, but their lives demonstrated very different priorities.

First, consider the Ananias of Acts 5:1-11.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

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The last six verses of Acts 4 explain how the infant church was growing. Many Jews came to Jerusalem intending to spend a specific amount of time to celebrate Pentecost. With the birth of the church, the new Christians remained in Jerusalem longer than planned so they could learn from the apostles. Funds and provisions were depleted while they remained. Christians from the Jerusalem area sold possessions and gave the money to the apostles, who made sure every Christian's needs were met. One individual, Barnabas, is specifically mentioned by name as contributing to the needs of others.

Ananias could have done great things for the church, but he instead chose to seek the world's glory. As a possessor of land, Ananias had some wealth. Seeing the praise given to those who sacrificed for the church, Ananias wanted a piece of that praise. He sold some land and claimed to have given all of the proceeds to the apostles. There was no sin in keeping part of the money for himself. The sin came from claiming all the money from the sale was turned over to the apostles. He also led his wife to sin in this matter. Ananias wanted the praise of men more than he wanted the praise of God. His reward was immediate, divine punishment – death.

Now consider the Ananias of Acts 9:10-19.

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as

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you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

Saul (Greek name), later called Paul (Hebrew name), spent a great deal of time and effort persecuting Christians. His actions appeared to be well known throughout the region. Understandably, when Ananias received a message from God to go to Saul, he expressed some fear. However, Ananias did not let that fear stop him from obeying God. He demonstrated his faith in God when he accepted God’s word on the matter and immediately went to Saul. As a result, Saul was baptized and became a great leader and proclaimer of the Word.

Ironically, both men named Ananias helped the church grow. The death of the first Ananias caused great fear among those who heard about what happened, both inside and outside the church. Acts 5:12-14 says that many listened to the apostles after hearing about Ananias, and **“believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women”** (5:14). The second Ananias led Saul to become a Christian, a man who later travelled the world leading both Jews and Gentiles to Christ. Though the actions of both men led to church growth, only one left an example we should follow. **Which Ananias are you – the liar who wanted the world’s praise or the man who in humble obedience let faith in God overcome fear?** †

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Apologetics Press has been the voice in churches of Christ for many years, speaking clearly and biblically on subjects pertaining to **Creation/Evolution, the Godhead, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and other vital questions of faith.** A new line of Bible class curriculum, **Exploring God’s Word**, is available online, and much of it can be downloaded free of charge. Dave Miller has produced excellent DVDs on **The Silencing of God in America** and **The Quran**. Phone: 800-234-8558; Website: www.ApologeticsPress.org.





Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

Write the first letter of each word indicated in the passages below.
Then, unscramble the letters to find the theme of the verses.

Genesis 22:2 11th word _____

Mark 10:45 1st word _____

John 10:11 2nd word _____

Romans 5:8 16th word _____

Romans 5:10 2nd word _____

Ephesians 1:7 5th word _____

Titus 2:14 12th word _____

Hebrews 9:14 8th word _____

Hebrews 9:22 15th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

Did the Early Church Practice Socialism?

Kevin L. Moore

Socialism is a political and economic philosophy that advocates community ownership and distribution of resources, typically controlled by the governing authorities. Does Acts 4:32-35 provide an example of socialism practiced in the early church, and does it set a precedent for all Christians to follow? The passage reads:

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (NKJV)

Contextually, multiplied thousands of Jewish people from distant lands had travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost (Acts 2:1, 5), a large percentage of whom had learned and obeyed the Gospel to mark the beginning of Christ's church (vs. 41, 47; 4:4; 5:14). Rather than returning home, however, many remained in Jerusalem for continued instruction and fellowship (2:42), perhaps some until they were later forced to disperse (8:1-4).

In the meantime, how were their physical needs to be met? A community spirit prevailed, coordinated first by the apostles and then by other godly men, which included selfless generosity and mutual sharing (2:44-45; 4:32-33; 6:1-3). **This was a unique situation not necessarily applicable to more normal living conditions.**

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The Scriptures teach a balanced message of bearing one another's burdens [when they cannot bear them alone] (Galatians 6:2), while each is to bear his own load [ordinarily] (v. 5). Accountable, able-bodied persons are expected to work and not to be unnecessary burdens on others. God expects people to provide for themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:7-13) and for their families (1 Timothy 5:8), while also helping the needy (Ephesians 4:28). The economic model of socialism, however, is not biblically enjoined. ✝

[Editor's Note: The contrasts between Christian fellowship wherein Christians voluntarily share their wealth and resources with less fortunate brethren and socialism are distinct. Socialism involves anti-Christian tenets: (1) 'an economic and political theory advocating collective or government ownership and the dismissal of private ownership,' (2) "a stage of society in Marxist theory transitional between capitalism and communism and distinguished by unequal distribution of goods and pay according to work done" ("Socialism." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. 9 Jun 2022 <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialism>>). Voluntary contrasts with involuntary. Christianity is neither an economic program nor a political party. Private ownership differs from complete public ownership. Charitable distribution and involuntary surrender of property are opposites. The early church neither practiced socialism nor communism. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Did You Know?

Adam's lifespan overlapped parts of the lives of Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech.



BIBLE QUESTIONS

Why Do People Get Old?

Dean Kelly



Life is interesting from a 6-year-old's perspective. Our daughter asked her precious daughter a series of questions. Her answers were really cute, and sometimes thought-provoking. One of the questions was, "Why do people get old?" Here is her answer: "Because they need to die and go to Heaven."

If I know my little granddaughter, she said that very matter-of-factly. What faith a little one has! There is one goal in life, and she is already aware that we are going to die, and we are getting ready for Heaven.

The apostle Paul wrote these words in Philippians 1:20-22.

According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. (NKJV)

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As Christians, we need to be focused on the fact that we do indeed grow older because we need to go to Heaven. I recently heard a recording (from last year's Polishing the Pulpit lectures) in which a brother dealt with verse 21. He made an excellent point when he said, "For to me, to live is _____, and to die is _____." He said if you will fill in the first blank, then he could tell you what goes in the second blank. Paul filled in the first blank with "Christ." Hence, the second blank is automatically filled in with "gain." The brother pointed out that so many fill in the first blank with a whole list of things: money, pleasure, job, etc. If that first blank is filled with anything but Christ, the second blank automatically fills in with "loss." **If I emphasize anything else but Jesus as the major focus of my life, the result will be eternal loss.**

My grandbaby is already learning that life is heading toward death, and death is our doorway to Heaven. I hope she will always keep that in her mind. May we all learn to live for Jesus so that when death comes, it will bring a joyous victory, our gain into Heaven. I encourage you, as well as myself, to honestly look at the first "blank" that we need to fill, like Paul did in Philippians 1:21, and ask, "How am I filling that blank, and **what is the focus of my life?**" All of the blessings of now, all of the love we can share with family, all of the accomplishments we may be able to attain, all of them fade into nothing if at the center of my life I do not find Jesus. We have work to do; we have life to live, but **only we can make death our gain – through Jesus!** †

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Gospel Gazette Online

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Rebecca Rushmore

1. What was Nehemiah's job?
2. What two men were unhappy that Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem?
3. When mocking the Jews, what animal did their enemies say would break the walls?
4. How many years was Nehemiah governor in Judah?
5. How long did it take to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
6. How many returned from captivity with Zerubbabel?
7. Who was present when Ezra read the Law?
8. Lots were cast to bring how many people to live in Jerusalem with the leaders?
9. Name the priest who worked with Tobiah.
10. What did Nehemiah command to be done to prevent commerce on the Sabbath?

(answers inside back cover)

Detours on the Road to Hell

Ernest S. Underwood

Matthew 7:13-14

Thesis: Salvation; to point out the different persons or things that are of assistance in keeping one from eternal destruction. To encourage the hearer to recognize what has been done for him and to encourage him to respond in a favorable way.

Introduction:

1. Read Matthew 7:13-14.
2. Regarding the text:
 - (1) There are either of two roads on which all are traveling.
 - (2) One road leads to God, the other to torment.
 - (3) It is the desire of God that all travel the road that leads to eternal life.
3. The road to Hell is divided.
 - (1) On one side are the malicious, murderers, rapists, liars, homosexuals and sodomites.
 - (2) On the other side are those who are good, honest and morally pure, and yet, they never have done anything to be saved.
4. Because God wants all men to be saved, He has established *detours* to keep man out of hell.
5. In this lesson, we shall identify some of those detours.

Body:

- I. **The Bible: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:21.**
 - A. This is the book that tells of God's plan for redeeming man (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 1:16).
 - B. This is the book that creates the faith that saves (Romans 10:17).
 - C. It tells of Heaven and how to get there, as well as Hell and how to escape going there.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

- D. When men shun the Bible, they close their eyes and ears to one of the detours on the road to Hell.
 - 1. How many have been taught but have not obeyed?
 - 2. How many children of God have been brought face to face with error in their lives but have not repented?

II. Christian Parents.

- A. The importance of godly parents is made plain in the Word of God (Isaac, Samuel, Timothy).
- B. How many of us are Christians because we had parents who taught us to be honest and accept truth?
- C. Parents, think of yourself as the only detour on the road to Hell your child may see.
- D. Children, are you following the example of godly parents?

III. Christian Friends.

- A. How many in this audience were brought to a knowledge of the truth by a friend?
- B. Jesus taught that one is to love his neighbor; this involves teaching.
- C. Think of the friends who have prayed for you, showed interest in you or pleaded with you.
- D. Don't close your eyes to this detour to keep you out of Hell.

IV. Sermons.

- A. 1 Corinthians 1:21, ***“It pleased God by the foolishness of the message preached to save them that believe”*** (NKJV).
- B. Many despise preaching, especially if the sermon applies to them.
- C. Yet, many people have been convicted of their sins and obeyed the Gospel because of Gospel preaching.
- D. I have observed as people cry, hold to the pew, then sit down after the invitation song when they knew they should respond.
- E. This sermon and all others are a barricade, a detour – **don't let them pass!**

V. Bible School Teachers.

- A. One place where enormous good is done, but gets little attention, is the Bible classroom.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

- B. What would this church be and what would our children be without dedicated Bible teachers in the classroom?
- C. I have observed, as some young person responds, the tears of joy in the eyes of the teacher. Why?
- D. Teachers need to be extremely careful of their lives because of the influence they exert.
- E. Elders need to make sure of the stability of each teacher for this same reason.
- F. Students, are you going to ignore all the good that has been done by your teachers and be lost in spite of them?


VI. Christian Mates.

- A. Some non-Christian mates have been converted to Christ because of the godly example of their companions.
- B. If your companion is **not** a Christian, you will never lead him or her to the Master if you are unfaithful or compromise your faith.
- C. For those of you who have faithful Christian companions, you ought to be thankful for them. It is they who have exerted the correct spiritual influence upon **your** children.
- D. Will you ignore this wonderful detour that God has provided you?

VII. The Cross.

- A. Stationed in the middle of the road to keep you from being lost is the cross – with the Savior hanging upon it, pouring out His blood that you might be saved.
- B. John 3:14; John 12:32; John 15:13; Hebrews 5:8-9.
- C. This day, will you look at the dying Savior and walk around Him on the cross, though you know that He died for you?

Conclusion:

- 1. God has done His part.
- 2. The blockades or detours have been placed to prevent you from being lost.
- 3. Will you ignore these things and be lost, **or**
- 4. Will you obey today and be saved? 

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Cybele and the Colossians

Mark McWhorter


The Gentile population of Colossae had several false gods and goddesses that they worshipped. One of the goddesses was Cybele.

Cybele was the Phrygian goddess of fertility. She represented the principle of life and reproduction. She was considered by many as the Mother of the Gods. Her crown was a miniature city wall. She was worshipped with cries and shouts associated with clashing cymbals and drums.

The Romans introduced an interesting rite to her worship. An initiate was placed in a pit beneath a wooden floor. A bull was sacrificed on the wooden floor. The blood would run through gaps in the floor and drench the initiate. This was thought to cleanse the initiate of sins and signified a **rebirth**. She became associated with the endless cycle of life, death and rebirth due to having been involved with resurrecting her lover Attis.

While Paul did not name any false gods in the letter to the Colossians, some of what he wrote does address false beliefs. In 3:16, he gave the proper musical worship toward God. In 1:4-6, Paul made the point that the faith, love and hope of Christ and His church are what produces spiritual fruit. In 1:9-10, he stated that it is the knowledge and wisdom of Christ's will that makes one fruitful.

In 1:14, Paul taught that it is Christ's blood which gives forgiveness of sins. In 1:16, he said that Christ created the world, and in 1:17, by Christ all things stay together. In 2:12-13, Paul told that it is through baptism that one is raised from the dead and made alive.

The Bible is amazing. God gave us enough information by which any false religion or belief can be answered. Study your Bible. Learn all you can, and then obey God. If any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you. 

Mark McWhorter has written daily devotionals for youth for decades. He lives in Pell City, Alabama, USA.

Noting Your Bible



Complaining

Complaining is something no one likes to hear, and no one wants to be around perpetual complainers, yet all of us do complain sometimes! We could fill a book with all the things about which we humans complain. Most of our complaints concern our fellow human beings, but Scripture possesses direct commands to refrain from complaining. Sometimes, our complaints are against our Creator. We see examples and condemnation of this in His Word. Let's open our Bibles and look at passages covering this topic and prayerfully examine ourselves in the light of His Word.

1. Note this topic in your Bible and write next to it “**1 Corinthians 10:10.**”
2. Turn to 1 Corinthians 10 and read the first fourteen verses or so and underline the commands that the inspired apostle Paul gave (vs. 7-10). (Your translation may use the word “murmur” or “grumble” in verse 10.) Next to verse 10, write, “**See Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:3.**”
3. At Exodus 15:24, note, “**Exodus 16:2-3.**” Turn to that chapter and write, “**Exodus 17:3.**” In these passages, consider about what Israel complained right after being spared the plagues in Egypt and being brought out of slavery through the miraculous parting of the waters by the Merciful God. At Exodus 17, note, “**See Numbers 11:1.**”
4. Turn to Numbers 11. You may want to read this and the following chapters through 17. Next to Numbers 11:1 write, “**Numbers 14:2-5.**” Turn over to chapter 14 and note, “**Numbers 16:41.**” Turn there and write, “**Numbers 17:10.**” Here, in the context of being brought to the land of promise, the children of Israel found fault with God's ways even though it was their own sin that caused the consequences of pun-

ishment. At Numbers 17:10, write, **“See Deuteronomy 1:12, 27.”**

5. Turn to Deuteronomy and consider that by his exhortations, Moses reminded Israel to remember the Law, which recorded the Israelite’s long past as complainers. (All of these passages we’ve viewed thus far should make us soberly reflect and bring to mind 1 Corinthians 10 where we started.) In Deuteronomy 1:27, write, **“See Proverbs 23:29-35.”**

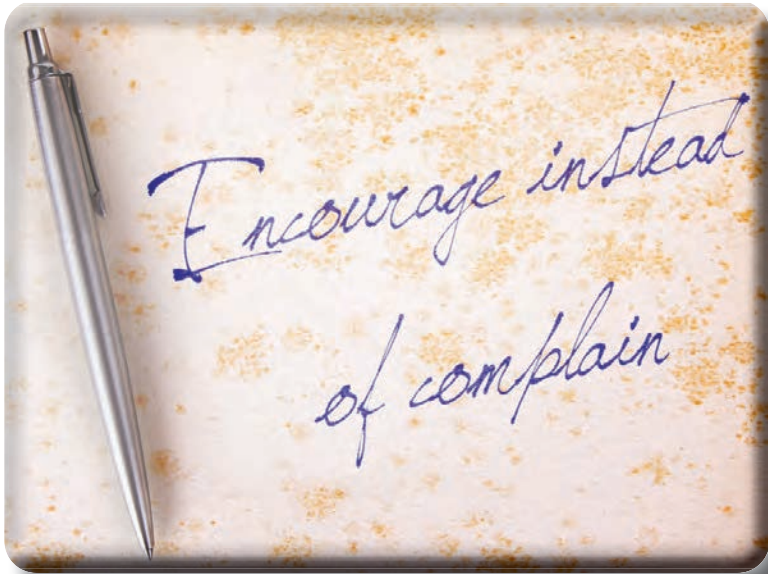
6. In Proverbs 23:29-35, note that much of our complaining comes from hardships resulting from our own doing – choosing sin rather than the way of righteousness. Here write, **“See Jude 16.”**



7. Turn to Jude 16 and read the whole book of Jude. Write, **“Complaining is ungodly; not Christ-like (See John 6:41).”**
8. In John 6, note how the Lord responds to complaints against Him, the Truth. At verses 60-61, the disciples murmured and questioned this “hard saying.” The religious leaders, Scribes and Pharisees, of the day complained about Jesus (Luke 15:2, 19:7). In Christ, is our ultimate example of how to respond to complaints that have no basis in truth. He was unjustly accused, endured an illegal trial and was hanged on a cross for 6 hours without complaining even once – and He would have been justified in His complaints! Make note of this in John 18-19. At John 6:41, write, **“See Acts 25:7.”**
9. Turn to Acts 25:7, noting that Paul endured complaining from his fellow countrymen, and we will too, if we teach the Truth. Next to this verse write, **“See Acts 6.”**
10. Read Acts 6:1-8 and note how the early church dealt with legitimate complaints. Swiftly and according to God’s Word, the apostles remedied the problem. Today, elders have the large part of this responsibility (Titus 1:9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Next to Acts 6:1, write, **“See Colossians 3:13.”**

11. In Colossians 3, read the whole chapter (Reading the whole book in one sitting is best). Note what God tells us to “put to death” or “put off” (vs. 5-9) and what Christians should “put on” (vs. 10-17). Within these verses is the command to forgive others, even when they have complained or quarreled about someone (me!) or something in the Lord’s body (v. 13). Why are we to forgive others? Because Christ forgives us when we come to Him in repentance! Underline in verse 13, “**even as Christ forgave you (See Philippians 2:14).**”
12. Read the whole book of Philippians or at least all of chapter 2, noting the Spirit’s topic here (v. 5) – Be like Christ! We all have to examine ourselves and ask the question: Do I **do all things without complaining – Am I Christ-like?** †

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Optional? Acapella and/or Instrumental Music?

Raymond Elliott

The God of Israel had this to say regarding the spiritual status of His people, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children”* (Hosea 4:6 NKJV). **Is it possible for spiritual Israel (the church of the Lord) to be rejected because of the lack of the knowledge of the Word of God? The answer is a resounding, “Yes!”** There is always the probability that the church of Jesus Christ can lose its identity because of ignorance of the Holy Scriptures. Where there is a void in the understanding of the Bible, there is the potential of being led astray from the teaching of the Lord. When this happens, an apostasy usually occurs over a period of time.

We must never assume that all Christians have a proper understanding of biblical matters. Therefore, it is of necessity that elders require of their preachers and teachers to present lessons and sermons over a broad spectrum of subjects pertaining to the authority of the Scriptures, how to rightly divide the Word of God, the identity of the church of our Lord, acceptable worship as well as the grace and love of God. **There is always a great need for a balance in the preaching of the Word of God.**

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy in this manner, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2). The next generation untaught will be unlearned in the ways of the Lord, and there will be the ever-present danger of drifting away from New Testament Christianity. You only have to read the writings of university professors, preachers, youth ministers and others involved in the leadership of the church to know that there is a woeful lack of Bible-based convictions regarding the identity of the church, what constitutes scriptural worship,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

the essentiality of baptism and other needed subjects.

One of the areas in which attitudes have changed over the years is regarding acceptable music in our worship to God. Several years ago, I read that a large congregation was wanting a “Student Minister” to work with young adults. The advertisement stated that the candidate should be “comfortable with both acapella and instrumental form of worship.” I thought that was a bold statement to make; however, brethren now know this is more common than we ever imagined.



An area congregation began in recent times to have what they call an “Alternative Instrumental Worship” on Sunday. Thus, the elders of that congregation are now trying to satisfy the different segments of the membership. Previously, they were allowing members to use the instrument during the weeknights but not on Sundays.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah, the prophet of God, sent for the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah to meet with him on Mount Carmel so

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

he could prove whose God should be served. Ahab also sent for all Israel to be present at Mount Carmel for this occasion. *“And Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ And the people answered him not a word”* (verse 21 ASV). The thought I want to glean from this passage is, there comes a time when the children of God must make very important decisions regarding what is authorized in our corporate worship to God. If instrumental music is acceptable in worship, why not use it in all the assemblies? On the other hand, if acapella music is the only authorized and acceptable music to be used in our assemblies, then, we are only to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). It is confusing and misleading for elders to offer an *alternative worship* where the **instrument** is used while in another assembly only **acapella singing** will be used! Why go ‘limping between the two’? Both assemblies cannot be acceptable to God if what is being done in one is not scriptural.

It is absolutely necessary for each child of God to study the Holy Scriptures and to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). We must *“no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”* (Ephesians 4:14 NKJV). We must understand that what is not authorized by the Word of God must be rejected. The apostle Paul wrote to the church of God with this admonition, *“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...”* (1 Corinthians 4:6). ✚

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[**Editorial Note:** This article is highly commendable, as well as much needed throughout the worldwide brotherhood – always crucial everywhere. No amount of restudying the plain and easily understood biblical information upon the pages of inspiration relative to the exclusive identity of the Lord’s church, including its worship, will produce different results – if fairly inspected by honest and open hearts. Hence, it is no wonder that dishonest hearts seek a different doctrinal mechanism that flies in the face of logical and rational normal communication – both common and ordinary daily exchanges as well as pertaining to God’s Word. **Only singing**, neither accompaniment by instruments (including clapping and stamping) nor augmented with extraneous vocal sounds (e.g., oohs, aahs, humming, whistling and other non-words), is **biblically authorized for Christian worship by the New Testament** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Period! End of story! ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



PROVERBS 17:22



The wife phones.

Husband: “Hi!”

Wife: “Hi! Did you clean the house?”

Husband: “Uhh...YUP!”

Wife: “Okay, I’m coming home. Need anything?”

Husband: “Yes, about 2 hours.”



The social studies teacher had just finished a unit on war and peace. “How many of you,” he asked, “would say you’re opposed to war?”

Not surprisingly, all hands went up. The teacher asked, “Who’ll give us the reason for being opposed to war?”

A large, bored-looking boy in the back of the room raised his hand.

“Alex?” the teacher said.

“I hate war,” Alex said, “because wars make history, and I hate history.”



Interviewer: You’re asking for a pretty high salary for someone without any experience.

Interviewee: Well, this job is going to be super hard since I don’t know what I’m doing.



Fresh out of business school, the young man answered a want ad for an accountant. Now, he was being interviewed by a very nervous man who ran a small business that he had started himself.

“I need someone with an accounting degree,” the man said. “But mainly, I’m looking for someone to do my worrying for me.”

“Excuse me?” the accountant said.

“I worry about a lot of things,” the man said, “but I don’t want to have to worry about money. Your job will be to take all the money worries off my back.”

“I see,” the accountant said, “and how much does the job pay?”

“I’ll start you at eighty thousand.”

“Eighty thousand dollars!” the accountant exclaimed. “How can such a small business afford a sum

PROVERBS 17:22

like that?"

"That," the owner said, "is your first worry."



The owner of a company told his employees, "You worked very hard this year, and therefore the company's profits increased dramatically. As a reward, I'm giving everyone a check for \$5,000!"

Thrilled, the employees gather round and high-fived one another.

"And if you work with the same zeal next year, I'll sign those checks!"



The lawyer's son wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, so he went to law school and graduated with honors. Then, he went home to join his father's firm.

At the end of his first day at work, he rushed into his father's office and said, "Father, father! In one day I broke the Smith case that you've been working on for so long!"

His father yelled, "Oh no! We've been living on the funding off that case for ten years!"



If a barber makes a mistake, it's a new style.

If a driver makes a mistake, it is an accident.

If an engineer makes a mistake, it is a new venture.

If a politician makes a mistake, it is a new law.

If a scientist makes a mistake, it is a new invention.

If a tailor makes a mistake, it is a new fashion.

If a teacher makes a mistake, it is a new theory.

If your boss makes a mistake, it is your mistake.

If an employee makes a mistake, it is a "mistake."



My local college just announced the end of a breaking scientific study that will change the course of world events.

Results showed that out of 2,293,618,367 people, 94% are too lazy to actually read that number.



My doctor told me to avoid any stress, so I threw his bill in the trash.

We Are ALL Ministers: Be a GOOD One!

1 Timothy Chapter 4

David Conley

In the text, Paul taught Timothy (and teaches us) how to be a good minister. The first thing that one must realize (vs. 1-5) is that there are **bad** ministers in the world who lead people down the wrong path. We certainly don't want be like them. Beginning in verse 6, we see how Paul outlined the life of a good minister.

- **Verse 6a** **REMINDE** people of Good Doctrine – Talk about the Truth
- **Verse 6b** **NOURISH YOURSELF** with “Words of Faith” & “Good Doctrine”
- **Verse 7a** **REFUSE** false doctrine ... avoid them ... don't practice them
- **Verse 7b** **EXERCISE YOURSELF** by practicing godliness.
- **Verse 8-10** **REALIZE** that Heaven is **WORTH** any amount of suffering
- **Verse 11** **COMMAND & TEACH** “Words of Faith” & “Good Doctrine”
- **Verse 12** **BE A GOOD EXAMPLE** in these areas:
 - Word What you say
 - Conversation What you do
 - Charity How you respond to others
 - Spirit Proper attitude toward life



TEXTUAL STUDIES

- Faith Trust God at all times
- Purity BE Good ... not just DO Good
- **Verse 13** **READING** - Study
- **Verse 13** **EXHORTATION** - Encourage others
- **Verse 13** **DOCTRINE** - Truth ... seeking what is true
- **Verse 14** Do your **GIFT** - Work in the area that God has given you to do
- **Verse 15** **MEDITATE** - Be focused on these things - Don't be distracted
- **Verse 16a** **TAKE HEED** to yourself – Be aware of what you are doing
- **Verse 16b** **CONTINUE** in them – **NEVER QUIT!**
- **Conclusion: Verse 16c** *“for in doing this thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* **Truly, we need to be good ministers!** †

David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.

Raising
Obedient

Cecil's

COMMENTS

Dogs and Children:

The key is consistent follow-through. Two things I have observed. (1) Two feisty dogs, who usually go wherever they want to, regardless of how loudly their owners are telling them to go elsewhere, have a particular small room where they have to stay when their owners are gone for a time. When either of their owners say, “Get in your house,” they trot to that room. (2) Two young kids, who usually ignore anything their parents say and make a loud fuss about anything they are actually made to do, get into their car seats and sit quietly while being buckled in, without objection. The reason? Owners and parents saw the necessity and followed through each time. Dogs and kids saw they were going to have to comply, and so, they did. Anytime owners or parents decide their dogs or children should obey, **they must follow through.** [Editor's Note: Society today, with all of its ills and violence, is evidence that a generation or two of parents should have taken childrearing more seriously. Responsible parenting is a must in every time. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

KINGDOM AND EMPIRE

George McNulty

At the time of the coming of God's kingdom on earth, an empire spread across three continents. It had been rising in power for almost 800 years before the incarnation of our Lord. Indeed, the wealthiest part of it would survive another 1,500 years, with many attempting to restore the unity Rome had brought to Europe and its overseas possessions during that time.

There is a difference between a kingdom and an empire. The latter is made from many nations, and the former is one nation. Both have a sovereign, and, in the first century, both rulers of Rome and God's kingdom shared common titles. Both were addressed as "Lord," with all the religious applications applied. However, the moral decency of the Lord Jesus far exceeded Caesar on every level.

One message of the New Testament is that Christ is Lord and Caesar was not! This clash of kingdom and empire was amplified when you consider that Caesar claimed the title, "son of God." Of course, in his case, it was false, but his worshipers did not take lightly to the Christian proclamation that not only was Jesus the Son of God but that He was **the only begotten Son of God** (John 1:18; 3:16), thus denying Caesar's claim of divine origin and authority over the Empire. There was certainly a clash of world views and religions.

As faith in Christ grew, so did His kingdom. In Philippians 4:22, Paul wrote, "*All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.*" Take note that these Christians remained working for Caesar, the cruel and twisted Nero who ruled at this time. These early Christians knew what it was to be faithful servants of their King behind enemy lines. They realized the true enemy was not Nero, but he was but a sinner in need of Christ, as well. They understood the war in which they found themselves was the war between light and darkness for the souls of human beings. Where they served, right at the very heart of government, was the ideal place for sharing the Good News. They knew their Lord and strove to overcome the temptation that so easily overcomes us and realized that

CHURCH HISTORY

Jesus *“was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). They saw how Nero gloried in sin while Christ came to save and lay down His life for the love of His people (Matthew 18:12).

We have no idea how many died to please Nero’s wickedness. The Roman Empire crushed its victims and enslaved well over a third of its inhabitants. Christ’s kingdom offers a much lighter burden. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

The kingdom of our Lord would outlast the Roman Empire and surpass all of its glory. The Caesars died, their empires crumbled and the gods they worshipped turned to dust. In the arenas of Rome, men would say to the emperor, “Those who are about to die salute you,” and die they did – an estimated 250,000 for the pleasure of their god-emperor. Their cries are gone, just like their empire, but Christ’s kingdom grows still. It grows in the hearts and minds of those who love their King Who died for them – Who rose from the dead, now reigns at the right hand of God and is exalted above all others.

We, the blessed citizens of the kingdom of God, must live for our King! We must proclaim the Gospel and ever forward march in His name. His church proclaims Jesus is Lord! To the powers of darkness in this present age, we have only two words: No surrender! †

George McNulty is a Gospel preacher who resides and labors for our Lord in Ireland.

We are commanded to pray *“for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”* (1 Timothy 2:2 NKJV). The prayers are for our elected leaders, but the requested result is for us. Quiet, peaceful and godly lives are more readily lived when the population is orderly and where there is no religious persecution. Those conditions are dependent on the actions of our elected leaders, for whom we are, therefore, to pray.

Cecil's

COMMENTS

Questions I Have about the Book of Mormon, Part 4

Shane Fisher

The Book of Mormon (hereafter *BOM*) is claimed to be another book inspired by God just like the Bible. We need to be like the Bereans and investigate whether these claims are true or false (Acts 17:10-12). I have read through it several times and here are some questions I have for Latter-Day Saints. My hope is that brethren will use this list of questions as an evangelistic tool to help a Latter-Day Saint come to the truth (John 8:31-32). The first three articles (in previous *VOTI* issues) contained forty-five questions. This is the fourth and final part in this series.

(46) 3 Nephi 11:13-17 states:

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying: “Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.”

Later on we learn the approximate number of the multitude in 3 Nephi 17:25: And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and

FROM THE HEART OF

they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and they were in number about **two thousand and five hundred souls** (emphasis added); and they did consist of men, women, and children.

Are we to honestly believe that over 2,500 people thrust their hands into the wounds of Jesus? Even if each person took 30 seconds to examine Jesus, then it would have taken about 21 hours in total! Also, it must be pointed out that this is supposed to remind us of Thomas (John 20:24-29). Another problem that rises surrounding this story in 3 Nephi is that the multitude had never even seen Jesus nor known him personally before this event. However, the reason why Thomas asked to see the wounds of Jesus is because he had known Him personally for three years and sought evidence that would convince him that this was the real body of the Lord and not a ghost.

(47) 3 Nephi 18:8-13 states:

And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the **wine of the cup** and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it... And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; **and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood**, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock. **But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the**

FROM THE HEART OF

gates of hell are ready open to receive them (emphasis added).

Since the LDS denomination changed the element from wine to water in the Lord's Supper, are they not disobeying God according to 3 Nephi 18:13?

(48) 3 Nephi 20:23-26 states:

Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me. And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Does Jesus quote from Peter's sermon in Acts 3 (vs. 23-26)?

(49) 3 Nephi 28:4-12 states:

And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father? And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired. And he said unto them: "Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. **And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then**

FROM THE HEART OF

shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand. And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one; And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me.” And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed. (emphasis added)

Where are these three Nephites that are supposed to tarry until the second coming of Jesus Christ? Also see Mormon 8:10,11; Ether 12:17.

(50) Mormon 8:1-5 states:

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father. And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed. And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not. Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not. Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also **if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone.** My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kins-

FROM THE HEART OF

folk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not. (emphasis added)

Moroni claims he is alone, he has no ore (the material to make the plates), and that he would continue to make the record if he had more room on the plates. He then proceeds to record what is known as Mormon 8-10, the book of Ether (vs. 1:1-5), and the book of Moroni (a total of **51 pages**). How is it that he continued to write after stating the space on the plates was limited and there was no material to make additional plates?

(51) Mormon 9:7-10 (401-421 A.D.) states:

And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues; Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them. For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.

Why does Mormon 9 (as well as Moroni 7:25-29) claim that miracles have not ceased when the New Testament affirms that the age of miracles did cease in the first century A.D. (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:7-16; Jude 3)?

(52) Ether 2:16 states:

And the Lord said: Go to work and build, after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brethren, and built barges after the manner which they had built, **according to the instructions of the Lord**. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water. And they were built after a manner that they were

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exceedingly tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish. (emphasis added)

If the Lord gave instructions on how to build the barges, then why does the brother of Jared have to inquire about imperfections in the design such as the ventilation and lighting system in the following verses? Ether 2:18-19 states:

And it came to pass that the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me. And behold, O Lord, in them there is no light; whither shall we steer? And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish.

(53) Another question arises from this story in Ether 2:20-25:

And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt make a hole **in the top, and also in the bottom**; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did so, according as the Lord had commanded. And he cried again unto the Lord saying: O Lord, behold I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness? And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels? For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire. For behold, ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon

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you. Nevertheless, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea; for the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and the floods have I sent forth. And behold, I prepare you against these things; for ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come. Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea? (emphasis added)

Why does God tell the brother of Jared to make a hole in the bottom of the barge? How will that help with getting air for them to breathe? How will they be able to keep the barges from sinking with holes in the bottom? The text states it took 344 days to travel to America (Ether 6:11).

(54) And it came to pass that he begat Omer, and Omer reigned in his stead. And Omer begat Jared; and Jared begat sons and daughters. And Jared rebelled against his father, and came and dwelt in the land of Heth. And it came to pass that he did flatter many people, because of his cunning words, until he had gained half of the kingdom. And when he had gained the half of the kingdom he gave battle unto his father, and he did carry away his father into captivity, and did make him serve in captivity; And now, in the days of the reign of Omer he was in captivity the half of his days. And it came to pass that he begat sons and daughters, among whom were Esrom and Coriantumr; And they were exceedingly angry because of the doings of Jared their brother, insomuch that they did raise an army and gave battle unto Jared. And it came to pass that they did give battle unto him by night. And it came to pass that when they had slain the army of Jared they were about to slay him also; and he pled with them that they would not slay him, and he would give up the kingdom unto his father. And it came to pass that they did grant unto him his life. And now Jared became exceedingly sorrowful because of the loss of the kingdom, for he had set his heart upon the kingdom and upon the glory of the world. Now the daughter of Jared being exceedingly expert, and

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seeing the sorrows of her father, thought to devise a plan whereby she could redeem the kingdom unto her father. Now the daughter of Jared was exceedingly fair. And it came to pass that she did talk with her father, and said unto him: Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they by their secret plans did obtain kingdoms and great glory? And now, therefore, let my father send for Akish, the son of Kimnor; and behold, I am fair, and I will dance before him, and I will please him, that he will desire me to wife; wherefore if he shall desire of thee that ye shall give unto him me to wife, then shall ye say: I will give her if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king. And now Omer was a friend to Akish; wherefore, when Jared had sent for Akish, the daughter of Jared danced before him that she pleased him, insomuch that he desired her to wife. And it came to pass that he said unto Jared: Give her unto me to wife. And Jared said unto him: I will give her unto you, if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king. And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them: Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you? And it came to pass that they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the same should lose his life. And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning.

Is Ether 8:1-15 a plagiarized copy of the historical account of John the Immerser, and Herodias from Mark 6:14-29?

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(55) Ether 15:30-31 states:

And it came to pass that when Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword, that he rested a little, he smote off the head of Shiz. And it came to pass that after he had smitten off the head of Shiz, that Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died.”

How could Shiz struggle for breath after being decapitated?

(56) Moroni 7:45 states:

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not **easily** provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Why does Moroni 7:45 use the word “easily” which is found in the King James Version, but not found in the original Greek text?

In conclusion, after investigating the *BOM*, can it honestly be the Word of God when it contains: (a) contradictions with the Bible on the timing of the revelation of the mystery of Christ, the time frame of the miraculous age, the time frame of the darkness when Jesus was crucified, etc., (b) many quotations from the New Testament Scriptures that had not yet been written, (c) the perpetuation of the King James Version copyists’ errors, (d) historical anachronisms such as the church of Christ starting before the first century A.D., the name “Christian” given before Acts 11:26, etc., (e) nineteenth-century theological discussions over infant baptism, universalism, etc., (f) unhistorical oddities such as Jews learning to write reformed Egyptian on metallic plates, Jews from the tribe of Manasseh serving as priests and claiming they were observing the Law of Moses, building a temple constructed like Solomon’s temple with a small population size, a great multitude who all touched the wounds of Jesus one by one that would have taken several hours to complete, and believing the ancestors of Native Americans were Jews who came from the old world in 600 B.C. **The answer is a resounding, “No!”** It is one of the greatest frauds ever conceived by conniving charlatans who sought to disguise it as a message from God. †

Shane Fisher is one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International*, a missionary and works with World Evangelism. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 34)

1. Lose heart.
2. Craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully.
3. The god of this age (Satan).
4. Himself.
5. The Gospel.
6. So the power would be of God and not man.
7. So the life of Jesus might be manifested.
8. Death, life.
9. The One who raised up Jesus.
10. His inner man.
11. A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.
12. The things which are not seen.
13. Temporary, eternal.

Scavenger Hunt (page 85)

1. cupbearer (1:11)
2. Sanballat, Tobiah (2:10)
3. a fox (4:3)
4. 12 (5:14)
5. 52 days (6:15)
6. 42,360 plus servants and singers (7:6-7, 66-67)
7. "men and women and those who could understand" (8:3)

Bible Word Scramble (page 80)

sacrifice

Bible Find (page 38)



8. 1 out of 10 or one tenth (11:1)
9. Eliashib (13:4)
10. gates to the city shut and guarded (13:15-19)

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