Volume One Hundred and Twelve

The Voice of Truth International

THIS CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES FLOODED, BUT THEY STILL MET FOR WORSHIP...NO MORE EXCUSES. HOW HUNGRY ARE YOU FOR GOD?



The Sacrifice for Sins

Aaron Cozort

God's incredible love for man surpasses all our understanding. We can substitute our feelings for what we think God might have felt. We can imagine what we would do for our child to save him, and we can imagine what we might do for other people's children to redeem them. However, we cannot reach the level of understanding necessary to comprehend what God did and has done for us. Jesus told Nicodemus, ***"…even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"*** (John 3:14b-17).

The atoning sacrifice could neither be an angel nor any other member of the heavenly host. All were insufficient. It could not be a man – because all humanity is flawed by sin. It could not be an animal, for the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. The only propitiatory sacrifice had to be God Himself, but it wasn't enough for it to be God. Not only was there a need for a sacrifice, but there was also need for a Mediator – someone who could bridge the separation between humanity and the Father. The sacrifice had to be the Son (Matthew 20:28; Mark 9:12; John 1:14; Romans 1:3-4; 8:3; Hebrews 10:1-2).

When Jesus came, He lived to be a sacrifice for humanity. He lived flawlessly in terms of righteousness, living without sin (Hebrews 4:14-15) and without guile (1 Peter 2:22). Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan, and the temptations of humanity were answered (Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:1-11). He lived as no one else has ever, nor will ever, live. Moreover, He did so for you and me so that He could defeat our greatest enemies – Satan and Death (Hebrews 2:14).

Did Jesus have to do this? Was it beyond His choice, or was He forced to obey? No. Instead, ***"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"*** (Philippians 2:8b). Let us live in view of the cross and the ***"…Lamb as though it had been slain…"*** (Revelation 5:6) because He died for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquity.

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

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THE DISPUTE ABOUT BAPTISM & PURIFICATION—SETTLED

JOHN 3:22-36

By RC Lupo 01/04/22

FACT 1:

JESUS WAS BAPTIZING THROUGH HIS DISCIPLES (4:2) IN THE LAND OF JUDAEA **(JOHN 3:22, 26).**

FACT 2:

JOHN ALSO WAS BAPTIZING IN AENON, NEAR TO SALEM BECAUSE THERE WAS MUCH WATER THERE **(JOHN 3:23).**

JOHN 3:25, "THEN THERE AROSE A QUESTION BETWEEN *SOME* OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES AND THE JEWS **ABOUT PURIFYING.**"

Q: WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO COMMAND BAPTISM, JESUS OR JOHN?

FACT 3:

BAPTISM IS FOR PURIFICATION OR CLEANSING (John 3:25). See Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21. Baptism washes away sin—cleanses the soul.

FACT 4:

THE AUTHORITY FOR JOHN'S BAPTISM CAME FROM HEAVEN. The people should have obeyed John (**Matthew 21:25, 26**).

JOHN 3:34-36, "FOR HE WHOM GOD HATH SENT SPEAKETH THE WORDS OF GOD: FOR GOD GIVETH NOT THE SPIRIT BY MEASURE *UNTO HIM*. 35) THE FATHER LOVETH THE SON, AND HATH GIVEN ALL THINGS INTO HIS HAND. 36) **HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON HATH EVERLASTING LIFE: AND HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT THE SON SHALL NOT SEE LIFE; BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH ON HIM.**"

FACT 5: THE AUTHORITY BY WHICH JESUS BAPTIZES IS ALSO FROM HEAVEN (John 3:27-35, esp. 34-35). People should obey Jesus even today See Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; John 12:48-50.

FACT 6: HE THAT BELIEVES (OBEYS) JESUS' TEACHING ON BAPTISM (CONTEXT) WILL HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE (JOHN 3:36). Resurrection with Christ—the new life and future resurrection is conditioned on Baptism with/in Him (Romans 6:1-**5**).

FACT 7 JOHN'S POINT: HE THAT DISOBEYS CHRIST'S COMMAND TO BE BAPTIZED SHALL NOT SEE LIFE, BUT GOD'S WRATH WILL REMAIN ON HIM (JOHN 3:36B). NOTE: "Believeth not" (KJV) from Gk. Ἀπειθέω (Apeitheō) = "obeyeth not" (ASV). Apeitheō is translated "do not obey" in **Romans 2:8** and "disobedient" in **1 Peter 3:20** (KJV). Notice in **1 Peter 3:21** that "BAPTISM DOTH ALSO NOW SAVE US (KJV)."



IT IS READILY ADMITTED BY ALL DENOMINATIONS THAT... NOT ONE OF THEM WILL GET ANYONE TO HEAVEN!

THIS REALLY BEGS THE QUESTION... WHY AREN'T YOU A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

☑ The CHURCH OF CHRIST is PRE-DENOMINATIONAL (**MATTHEW 16:18-19**).

- **CATHOLICISM** is not the true church or the first church, but is the first apostate church (**2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-5**).
- **NO PROTESTANT DENOMINATION** is more than 521 years old. All are too young to be the one true church.
- A denomination is a division—each one different from another—a schism and therefore sinful (**1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:12-27** [**25**]). The doctrine taught in the early church was the same anywhere and in every church of the Lord (**1 Corinthians 4:17; 14:33; 1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 4:1-4**).

☑ There is JUST ONE CHURCH OF CHRIST (**MATTHEW 16:18; EPHESIANS 1:22-23; 4:4-6**). ALL MAN-MADE DOCTRINES OR TRADITIONS WILL BE ROOTED UP (**MATTHEW 7:15-23; 15:8-13**).

☑ JESUS IS COMING FOR HIS CHURCH—HIS KINGDOM AND NO OTHER (**MATTHEW 16:18-19; COLOSSIANS 1:2,13; REVELATION 1:9; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:22-26**).

☑ JESUS IS SAVIOR OF THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY (**EPHESIANS 1:22-23; 5:23**).

SALVATION IS GUARANTEED TO ALL THE FAITHFUL IN THE LORD'S CHURCH

COLOSSIANS 1:2; REVELATION 2:10-11; 14:13

BY RC LUPO 01/04/22



Never Too Lost to Be Saved

Louis Rushmore

With keen interest, I observed on social media recently the statement, "Nobody is ever too lost to be saved." How true! Yet, Christians generally are not as accepting as they ought to be toward some people who have repented of their sins. In a sense, God looks at all sins similarly in as much as any sin for which a sinner does not repent will cause him or her to be lost eternally (Romans 3:10, 23). Even a sin less obnoxious to human sensitivities – like telling a lie – can keep a soul out of Heaven (Revelation 21:8). Note that Jesus Christ classified liars alongside of murderers, the sexually immoral, practitioners of witchcraft and idol worshippers. However, God hates some sins more than He despises other sins, and He refers to them as abominations (Proverbs 6:16-19); lying is in this list, too.

Nevertheless, it is not the telling of a lie on which we want to focus our attention presently. Instead, let's notice from Scripture some penitent souls whose former sins, which if they were the sins of people today, that church members would be reluctant to forget, though God chooses to forget sins for which contrite souls repent (Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

First, consider 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, which reads:

> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither **fornicators**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor **homosexuals**, nor **sodomites** [male prostitutes],

nor **thieves**, nor **covetous**, nor **drunkards** [intoxicated ones], nor **revilers** [verbally or physically abusive persons], nor **extortioners** will inherit the kingdom of God. 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. (NKJV)



Not only our children, but others outside our families are candidates for conversion by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only people like us in race, economics, academics and education are suitable persons to whom we need to take God's Word. Not only so-called good, moral people need God's forgiveness (and forgiveness by Christians) when they repent, but so do prostitutes, homosexuals, drunkards, the drug addicted "and such like" (Galatians 5:19-21 KJV), when they obey the Gospel (Romans 6:17).

Despite the Corinthian Christians having been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, male prostitutes, thieves, covetous, drunks, abusive people and extortioners, through their obedience of the Gospel, they were **washed** in the blood of Christ, **sanctified** and **justified**. Those precious penitent souls had some horrific backgrounds prior to becoming Christians. Yet, they comprised "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2 NKJV). The Godhead accepted them (1 Corinthians 6:11) on the basis of their Gospel obedience, and we, today, need to accept as

brethren anyone and everyone who renders obedience to the Gospel. As mortals, we are not in a position to act as though we are omniscient and pass judgment (James 4:11) on a person's sincerity or the genuineness of his or her Gospel obedience. Anything that God has chosen to forget is not something that we ought to remember **against** another; prudence, though, might well lead the church to refrain from appointing a brother to be the congregational treasurer since he embezzled the Lord's money previously when he was the treasurer formerly.

Secondly, consider passages that show the apostle Paul in his earlier days, when he was better known as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7:58; 9:11), was a murderer (Acts 9:1; 22:4) in his zealous persecution of Christians. Others he dragged from their homes to prison (Acts 8:3). Can you imagine the reluctance of Christians to accept Paul as a brother in Christ, as well as to forgive him for the rough treatment, imprisonment and death of their Christian families and friends?

> ***And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.*** (Acts 9:26-28)

Barnabas and the apostles accepted the converted former persecutor, but other Christians "attempted to kill him" (Acts 9:29).

It is no wonder, then, that Saul – the apostle Paul – worked for the Lord more efficiently among the Gentiles rather than among the Jews and Jewish Christians.

> ***But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to***

the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (Galatians 2:7-9)

Not only so, but the apostle Paul became as zealous a promoter of Christianity as he had been before an opponent of it. ***"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"*** (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). The apostle Paul's ministry included penning more epistles than any other divinely guided writer of the New Testament. All Christians today are indebted to the apostle Paul, though he had been a murderer and a persecutor of the Lord's church.

Therefore, from the two biblical scenarios above, we can discern that the vilest of sinners can obey the Gospel of Christ. In so doing, God will forgive them and forget their sins. Hence, Christians, too, ought to forgive those who obey the Gospel and not hold their former sinful lives **against** them. Even people whose sinful pasts are the most revolting to us, once converted, may prove to be champions of the Christian faith. In a sense, in God's eyes, every accountable soul has by his or her sin been repulsive to Him (Isaiah 59:1-2). Happily, we have a God who is willing to forgive us of our sins and to forget them. May every Christian imitate God by forgiving and forgetting the sins of everyone who obeys the Gospel of Christ.

Louis Rushmore is the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. He has been preaching since 1973 in the USA and abroad as well as authored several books and tracts. He resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.

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Success without God

Jerry Bates

I feel sure that all would agree that the Bible teaches that God will bless His people. ***"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him"*** (2 Chronicles 16:9). In contrast to that, notice Proverbs 28:9, ***"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."*** These verses tell us that God cares for and blesses His people; however, those who are disobedient have no such promise. Even the prayer of a wicked person is an abomination to God.

Many would like to think that without God life would just be a long series of blunders, heartaches, disappointments and failures, but that is obviously not true. Many people of the world become very wealthy; many Christians do not. Many non-Christians have happy marriages and good families without God; some Christians do not. Many wicked people seem to enjoy life to the fullest, while some Christians have multiple heartaches. Thus, some look at life and ask, "Why serve God?" Even David wondered about that. He wrote in Psalm 73:3, ***"For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."***

It is true that man may be able to achieve amazing worldly success without God. We find examples all around us and in the Bible as well. One such example was Omri, a very successful king of Israel mentioned in 1 Kings 16:23-28. He reigned for a total of 12 years and was one of the most capable kings Israel ever had, yet without the help of God. First Kings 16:25 summarizes his life by saying, ***"Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him."***

Omri was a renowned soldier, known even beyond the borders of Israel.

When he came to the throne, Israel was a nation in chaos and turmoil. The previous king had been murdered after reigning only two years. Half the people wanted Omri to be king, and the other half wanted a man by the name of Tibni to be king. These men shared the kingship for 4-5 years. Yet, he united Israel and was so powerful a king that even a century later, three Assyrian rulers referred to Israel as the "house of Omri." Indeed, people may have looked at him and said, "Truly he is blessed by God," but Scripture declares him wicked and in continual violation of God's will.



He was also a man of practical wisdom. He changed the capital of Israel to Samaria, a city which was more easily defended than other cities that had been used as capitals. It seemed to have been a wise choice as it remained the capital until the nation was destroyed about 160 years later. Apparently, Omri was an intelligent and wise king, and yet, he was spiritually blind.

Since Omri was a king, we can safely assume that he was materially wealthy and enjoyed the good things of life. He also achieved permanent notoriety. He had a popularity that few ever achieve and was widely known outside of Israel. He is the first Jewish king whose name is mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions. Omri is mentioned twice on the Moabite stone. These lines are written on that stone: "Omri was king of Israel, and he afflicted Moab many days… Now Omri had taken possession of all the land of Medeba and dwelt in it during his days and half the days of the son…" The one who wrote this stone is Mesha, a Moabite king mentioned

in 2 Kings 3:4. He was bragging of his conquests. Omri had defeated his father, but Mesha had recovered all the land that his father had lost. Thus, he was basically saying, "I am greater than the greatest."

Omri achieved great wealth, success and notoriety, all without the help of God, because his kingship exceeded all before him in wickedness. "The statutes of Omri" became a byword for a life opposed to the law of God. Many years later, Micah 6:16 refers to him by saying, ***"For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab's house are done; and you walk in their counsels…"*** From a worldly standpoint, Omri achieved outstanding success, yet when he died, Scripture summarized his life by saying, ***"So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab his son reigned in his place"*** (1 Kings 16:28).

Any success achieved in life without God is empty, hollow and hopeless. We might be able to achieve worldly success without God, but that is all we will get. One day, we will all face the Judgment, and on that day, our lives will be marked, "Failure." If you want to become rich, famous, have great worldly vision, you might achieve that without God. Yet, as Christ said to the Pharisees who loved the praise of men, ***"They have their reward"*** (Matthew 6:2). In other words, if you want success in this world, you might achieve that without God, but that is all you will get. We must remember that there is an eternity waiting after this life is over. What kind of success will we have then?

There is a story of a conversation between a father and his son who was graduating from high school. The father asked the son what his plans were. He replied, "You know that I will go to college." The father asked, "Then what?" The son said that he would get a job. "Then what," asked the father. The son said, "I will get married and raise a family." The father continued asking, "Then what?" "I will make a lot of money so I can retire." "Then what?" The son said, "I guess I will die." "Then what?" The son dejectedly bowed his head because he had not thought about that. He had many plans for this life but none for the hereafter. That describes the situation of multitudes. They have many plans for this life but none for the next life. In this life, we can achieve success without the help of God, but **for eternity, there can be no success without God.**

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: Laboring, Yet Resting

Shane Fisher

A paradox is "a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, yet in fact expresses a possible truth" (www.dictionary.com). The Bible contains many paradoxes that reveal great truths. The paradox under consideration for this article is that the Bible affirms that as the faithful Christian labors, there will also be rest along the way. The Christian must press on toward the goal of the ultimate, consummated rest in Heaven.

The Creation of God & the Work Ethic

God gave mankind work from the beginning of the creation, even before sin entered the world (Genesis 3:1-6). Genesis 2:15 states, "***Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.***" Unfortunately, when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, one of the consequences was that mankind would have to work under hostile conditions (Genesis 3:17-19).

One theme of Ecclesiastes that Solomon taught was, if we view the world apart from God, then we will have a pessimistic outlook on life. We will view our work as in vain. It will be meaningless. We will grasp for the wind. Solomon used this phrase "***under the sun***" (29 times, Ecclesiastes 1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17,18, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:13, 18; 6:1, 12; 8:9,1 5, 17; 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 10:5) frequently to describe the pessimistic outlook on life apart from God.

Jesus, Who is greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42) and the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), came to undo the curse of physical death by becoming the first fruits from the dead (i.e., the first one to be raised incorruptible from the dead to die no more, 1 Corinthians 15:20). Paul ended the great resurrection section by showing that as faithful Christians have obtained the victory over physical death through Jesus Christ, then the work that is done here will not be meaningless. First Corinthians 15:57-58 states, "***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord***."

The Competition & Laziness

The virtue of hard work has certainly fallen on hard times in the modern world. Laziness is certainly in competition with the work ethic, and it is winning by great strides. There is a lazy mindset on display by many members of the church when it comes to doing church work. Some Christians have forgotten that the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:7-16) and that each member needs to contribute his or her part to the growth of the church.

The Bible disdains laziness. Notice the following passages in Proverbs.

- Proverbs 12:27, "***The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession.***"
- Proverbs 13:4, "***The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.***"
- Proverbs 15:19, "***The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway.***"
- Proverbs 19:24, "***A lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.***"
- Proverbs 20:4, "***The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.***"
- Proverbs 24:30-34, "***I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber,***

A little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man."

- Proverbs 26:13-16, "***The lazy man says, 'There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!' As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.***"

How does Proverbs describe the lazy man? It is a person who makes no preparation, has no persistence, wants others to do the work for him or her, has no vision and has no understanding. Does the mindset of the lazy man describe some members of the church? Tragically, it does! Has not this mindset invaded the church? It certainly has! Why are there some congregations that are shrinking in number? One of the factors is that no one wants to do the work. If no one wants to do the work, then the congregation will die out!

Please read the parable of the talents very carefully in Matthew 25:14-30. Notice the three men. The five-talent man gained five more talents for the Lord. The two-talent man gained two more talents for the Lord. The one talent man hid his talent in the ground. The problem was not that the one talent man had one talent. **The problem was that he did not use his one talent**. Are you using your talent or talents for the Lord even if you have just one? (A talent in the context of Matthew 25 referred to material wealth, but it fairly represents anything over which we have control – wealth, abilities, skills, time, etc.)

The Christ & His Work and Mission

What is the solution and cure to laziness? Be like Jesus. Jesus understood His mission, even when He was twelve years old. When Jesus' parents found Him in the Temple, look at what happened. Luke 2:48-50 states, ***"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them."*** Jesus knew that He had a mission to complete, and He was true to it (Luke 9:51; John 19:30). Jesus worked very hard throughout His ministry (John 5:17). It is also true, though, that Jesus did take some time for rest and relaxation, during which He devoted time to prayer

(Mark 6:31,46). There will be times when we also need rest and rejuvenation.

The Church & Her Work and Mission

Christ did not ascend into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11) just to have all of the work that God had been planning from eternity cease. No! Christ sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles to equip them miraculously to be guided into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 2:1-4), and the early Christians would receive miraculous gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 2:38-39; 8:14-16; 19:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:6) to equip them to carry out their ministry. The miracles they performed guaranteed that the message they spoke was from God (Mark 16:17-20). Even though the miraculous age has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:7-16), the work of teaching the Gospel still continues! (2 Timothy 2:2) It is so wonderful that we have God's completed revelation in written form that can equip us unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The work ought to continue until Jesus returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). We ought to imitate the example of the Christians in Thessalonica who were imitating Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1). The apostle Paul wrote concerning them in 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, "***We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.***"

The Completion of the Mission

In a previous article (volume 108) for this series, I discussed the "already, but not yet" theme of the Bible and illustrated it by five themes: (1) the resurrection, (2) the kingdom, (3) salvation, (4) the judgment and (5) the heavenly city of God. Another theme that falls into this category is an inaugurated rest and a consummating rest. Jesus launched this inaugurated rest that we can enjoy in Matthew 11:28-30, which reads, "***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***."

We experience an inaugurated rest in Jesus when we trust and obey the Gospel (Acts 2:38). Even though there is turmoil and chaos in the world all around us, we can still remember that in Christ we can experience a wonderful inaugurated rest from the burden and guilt of sin. This is great

assurance! However, we must continue to hold fast to the Lord and not give in so easily to the snares of the devil who wants us to be entrapped again in this evil world of unrest (2 Corinthians 2:11; Colossians 1:23-24).

Read carefully the admonition in Hebrews 3:12-4:11 where the writer compared the church to old Israel in the wilderness. We must continue to hold fast so that we may enter into that consummated rest of Heaven.

Let us complete the mission of living for the Master so that we may hear it said of us, "***Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them***" (Revelation 14:13). If we are faithful in the Lord when we die, then one glorious day, we will enter into that consummated rest of Heaven itself!

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1932—2008

Man Needs God

J.C. Choate

When we speak of God, we are talking about the God of Heaven, the One Who created the earth and all things therein – the God Who created us. In Genesis 1:1 we read, ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*** Genesis 1:27 says, ***"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."***

Now the first man and woman, like everything else, were created by a miracle. That is, God simply spoke them into existence, but then He put the law of nature into force. Ever since that time, all things have come into existence after their kind. That is, man, animals and all living things have been given the power to reproduce themselves.

Speaking of God's creation, David said in Psalm 19:1-3, ***"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."***

Of all of God's creation, man is the only one that often curses his Maker instead of praising Him. Yet, man has a greater need of God than all the other creatures put together. Man is different. He is physical, but he is also spiritual. God made him ***"in His own image,"*** giving him an **undying spirit** to dwell in his body. This means that even though the body will die and return to the dust of the earth, the spirit does not die, but it lives on for all eternity. Speaking of man's death, we read in Ecclesiastes 12:7, ***"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."*** The wise man recognizes and obeys His Creator. It is the fool who says in his heart, ***"There is no God"*** (Psalm 14:1).

God made humans in His image in another very important way: we

can discern right from wrong, good from evil. No other living thing of creation has this ability. God allows humans to choose whether they will obey Him and do good or whether they will disobey Him and do evil.

Human beings possess intelligence. They are able to think, make decisions and to choose what they will or will not do. Because man has this ability, he often becomes full of pride. He feels important, and he thinks that he is as great as God Himself. He fails to see his need for God, but this is his mistake. Even though he can think and can do many amazing things, still in comparison to his Maker, he is infinitesimally small.

Man is a sinner. He is lost and he needs help. He needs forgiveness, and the only One Who can do this is God Himself.

We were born into this world without sin. We did not inherit the sins of our forefathers or even of Adam and Eve, the first human beings to sin. Ezekiel, a prophet of God, said, ***"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statues, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die"*** (Ezekiel 18:20-21).

Some may wonder what causes a child to be bad if children are born without sin. You have heard children lie, say all kinds of bad things and even to take the Lord's name in vain. You have seen children steal and do many other things that are wrong. Now, you wonder how they can do all of these things if they are born pure, innocent and without sin. Let me ask you a question. How do children learn to speak a language? How do they learn to do all of the other things they do? You know that they learn these things by watching and listening to those around them. They are simply imitating others.

Yet, you may ask, "Didn't David say that in sin his mother conceived him?" Yes, but who was the sinner? David, who was yet unborn or his mother who was an adult?

Jesus called a child and set him in the midst of those around Him, ***"And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in***

the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:3-6).

My friends, infants and little children are not sinners, but we adults are sinners. We are the ones who are guilty. Even when little children do wrong, adults are responsible. Go back and read again what Jesus said about offending a little child, and consider our grave responsibility as adult examples for the children who are watching us.

It is when a child grows up and becomes knowledgeable of right and wrong that he or she becomes a sinner. This means that all mature adults with normal minds are sinners. As such, one is lost, condemned before God, and if one dies in that state he or she will be lost for all eternity. Since we cannot save ourselves or obtain forgiveness of our sins through good works or through some manmade religion, it means that we must look to God for help. Only God, through His grace and mercy, in giving His Son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins, can save us. Paul said that even though we are sinners, ***"…when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"*** (Romans 5:6-9).

To sum all of this up: God created humans. As individuals, we were born into this world without sin, but when we became old enough to understand right and wrong, we became sinful. God, knowing our need and our inability to save ourselves, sent His own Son to die for us, paying the price for our sins. As we become believers in God and obey the teachings of Christ, He saves us. This obedience includes repenting of our sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God and being baptized in water for the remission of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). When we do this, the Lord saves us and adds us to His church (Acts 2:47). Isn't that simple? If we are faithful to the Lord until we die, we have the promise of eternal life (Revelation 2:10).

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



The Oneness of the Church or the Church that Jesus Built

Byron Nichols

Let me begin by expressing my sincere respect for many religious people who, if they read the remainder of this article, will disagree with some of the content. That doesn't keep me from still having appreciation for their desire to be godly people. People who are sincere and dedicated to serving God and Jesus deserve respect and appreciation.

Such people can be found in many different religious groups wearing vastly different religious names and promoting an extensive variety of contrasting doctrines, resulting in a lot of confusion. Their church names often conflict with each other and reflect the name of an earthly individual, whereas in Matthew 16:18 Jesus declared, ***"I will build My church."*** As we read through the New Testament, we don't find any record of any other person or group having built his or its church.

Yes, after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, we read of various churches in the New Testament. It may be sincerely believed that this means that there was the church built by Christ in Jerusalem, plus other religious groups that also built churches with differing beliefs and practices. However, all the churches mentioned in the New Testament were a part of the one church that Jesus built and which He purchased with His blood. Those churches were located in different places but were teaching and practicing the doctrine of Christ, not the doctrines of men.

The biblical concept of the church is enhanced by some of what the



apostle Paul said in Romans 16. In verse 1, he commended a woman named Phoebe and identified her as ***"a servant of the church in Cenchrea."*** This apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, surely understood that Jesus built His church, and here he referred to one part of that church, ***"the church"*** in Cenchrea. This was not a church that taught and practiced things different from those of Christ's church in Jerusalem. These were two groups of Christians who lived in different places but lived by and promoted the same Gospel given by the Son of God. Each group was a group of Christians, a **congregation** (or church) devoted to following the teachings of Christ in their area. These two churches were not different religious bodies, but rather they were what we know as **congregations**, physically separate but spiritually combined.

In Romans 16:4-5 are some good examples of a common use of the term ***"church."*** In verse 4, Paul spoke of ***"all the churches of the Gentiles."*** These ***"churches"*** were obviously not religious bodies like denominational churches of our time. These ***"churches"*** were congregations of Christians who were followers of Christ, not religious bodies that promoted opposing doctrines.

In Romans 16:16, the inspired Paul wrote these words to the Christians of the church in Cenchrea, ***"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you."*** Since the denominations did not come into

existence for centuries after Paul wrote these words, surely, he spoke of the congregations of Christ's church, the organized groups of Christians in various places. In the very next verse (17), Paul strongly cautioned his readers regarding doctrinal problems. He said, ***"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them."***

Christ built His church in approximately A.D. 30. No other churches came into existence until hundreds of years had passed. The church is the **bride** (singular) of Christ. In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul wrote, ***"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*** We must be honest with ourselves and admit that the Son of God did not and does not have a multiplicity of spiritual brides but only one – His church.

Division contributes to weakness and failure. In Mark 3:24-25, Jesus used a parable in an effort to teach that a kingdom or a house that is divided ***"cannot stand."*** The Christian religion is so divided that it serves as an illustration of what the Savior was saying. One of the major reasons that the Christian religion is so divided is because all kinds of contradictory doctrines and practices are promoted. The ultimate result will be **'a divided house that cannot stand.'**

It is wonderful that many efforts are made to promote Christianity, but it is heartbreaking to witness what is resulting. What about the multitude of different churches? Do they teach and practice the same doctrines that Christ implanted in His church?

I recently happened to come across a statement made by a denominational preacher. I believe it is well worth our attention:

> "We've got to get it together, because Jesus is coming, and He's coming for His **bride**, not a **harem**."

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

Jesus declared, *"I will build My church."*



5-Minute Bible Study

God's Word

Paula Bates

1. "Heaven and _____ will pass away, but my words will by no _____ pass away." Mark 13:31
2. "But the word of God _____ and _____." Acts 12:24
3. "Then the word of God _____, and the number of the _____ multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were _____ to the faith." Acts 6:7
4. "Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their _____ together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled _____ thousand pieces of silver. So the _____ of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." Acts 19: 19-20
5. "Sanctify them by Your _____. Your word is truth." John 17:17
6. "But the word of the _____ endures forever. Now this is the word which by the _____ was preached to you." 1 Peter 1:25

Answers:

1. Earth, means
2. Grew, multiplied
3. Spread, disciples, obedient
4. Books, fifty, word
5. Truth
6. Lord, gospel

Created Full Grown

Cecil May, Jr.

The proposal that the earth is billions of years old is based on calculations as to how long it takes for organic material to turn into oil, for example. If you could have met Adam the day after he was created, how old would you have guessed him to be? He was, of course, created full grown. There is no reason not to assume that other things created were also created full grown. A full-grown earth, planned by a Creator who knew what would be needed, would have had mountains, canyons, hills and petroleum.



That is easier to believe than that the earth began with nothing and gradually, accidentally became the earth we now have. That is our choice: an intelligent, all-powerful Creator or nothing becoming something, accidentally evolving into, not only a full-grown earth but intelligent, rational beings capable of seeing, hearing and talking.

Take your choice. I have made mine. ***"…What may be known of God is manifest in them*** [mankind], ***for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"*** (Romans 1:19-20 NKJV).

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

It All Hinges on Seven Days

Terry Wheeler



A renowned atheist, Stephen Jay Gould, as he was struggling with cancer, took it upon himself before he died to discover the ***real*** reason the world followed a seven-day week. He rejected outright the revelation of Genesis and sought what to him would be a reasonable alternative. He found none.

However, since I heard of his fool's errand, I also began to wonder, "Why seven days?" Certainly, God could have made the week as long as He chose, and seven is a number of perfection. Yet, there is always a solid rationale with God that He reveals to men, and now, I can share it with you.

It takes seven days (one week) for the moon to get through one of its phases (new, waxing first quarter, full, waning third quarter). In four weeks, the moon completes its phase cycle (one month). In three completions of its cycle, a season is complete (validated by what constellation is visible in the night sky: Orion for winter, Leo for spring, Scorpius for summer, Andromeda for fall). After four seasons, the year is complete.

There it is. Notice I did not say it was complicated. Frankly, from the beginning, men have had to hold to such knowledge for survival, especially in planting and harvesting. In addition, with what we know now of the stars and celestial mechanics, even more the majesty and intricacy of this grand creation are broadcast and shown to be for us here on earth.

It all hinges on our seven-day week (Exodus 20:11). It is all found already revealed in God's Holy Word. No wonder Mr. Gould could not see it. It was over his head.

Terry Wheeler preaches for the Village Church of Christ in Lady Lake, Florida, USA.

The Water Monkey

David Everson

"And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes" (Ezekiel 47:9 NKJV). God, through the prophet Ezekiel, confirmed that in the creation of the world, He created the rivers of the earth to bring forth many different types of fish. Let's look at one of these marvels of creation – the water monkey.

The common name water monkey has been given to the silver arowana because it is a very capable jumper. It can leap out of the water in the rivers where it lives to catch insects on plants above the water and even birds that fly low over the river or are perched on low hanging limbs. Other arowana have been caught with bats, mice and snakes in their stomachs, but its normal diet is small fish, insects and other floating or swimming animals. Sometimes the arowana is called the dragon fish. As it reaches its adult size, which can be 2-3 feet, the large armor-like scales reflect red, blue and green colors from lights that shine on it. The dragon fish also has two small barbels or whiskers on its lower lip, giving them a very ancient dragon-like appearance. The barbels allow the arowana essentially to *see* in total darkness by feeling the water around it. In addition, God also created them with very keen vision to see both above and below the water in search of their prey.

The silver arowana lives in both black and white water rivers in South American countries. Black-water rivers have wood and leaves floating in them that make the water soft and acidic. A white-water river is pale muddy, milky or coffee-like colors, due to the countryside through which it travels. Both river habitats have unique chemistry, sediments and water colors, but the arowana can live in both types of rivers.

God created the arowana with unique mouth structures. Its mouth is very much like a drawbridge with three mouth parts that open quickly and suck in its prey. Inside of this odd mouth is a bony tongue that appears to be used

for holding its prey. The tongue is actually a toothed bone on the floor of the mouth; this tongue has teeth that bite against teeth on the roof of the mouth.



The arowana besides having gills is also an air breather. It can obtain oxygen from air by sucking it into its swim bladder, which is lined with capillaries like lung tissue. This allows it to gulp air and then absorb it into the blood.

The arowana are mouth brooders, taking several hundred eggs into the mouth after fertilization. There, they are held and protected; subsequently, the fry can swim in and out for protection from larger fish. Zoologists consider the arowana to be living fossils, since many fossils have been found of this fish that are indistinguishable from the living fish.

The mighty Creator created a fish with a variety of features that cause men to marvel. Let us always praise God for what He has done.

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.

How Do You Measure Up?

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, ***that is to say, his flesh; and having an high*** *priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:16-25

Jesus Is

Gary C. Hampton

Many people talk about Jesus without knowing who He truly is. The prophet who often spoke of the suffering servant described Him beautifully. ***"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"*** (Isaiah 9:6).

Jesus is wonderful for all who have received the forgiveness of sins. Paul declared, ***"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** (Romans 7:24-25a). This was achieved by God making Him bear sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He is also a prized counselor who gives the best advice because in Him are the ***"treasures of wisdom and knowledge"*** (Colossians 2:1-3). He delivered the words of the Father, which lead to everlasting life (John 12:46-50).

Our Savior can also be described as Mighty God since He created all things (Hebrews 1:1-3). ***"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him"*** (Colossians 1:16).

Our Lord is also Everlasting Father, which Homer Hailey says is in the sense of protector and sustainer. Joseph said, ***"So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"*** (Genesis 45:8). Paul explained, ***"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist"*** (Colossians 1:17).

Jesus is likewise the Prince of Peace because He sacrificed His blood to reconcile us to God (Ephesians 2:13-16; Romans 4:25-5:1). Those taking all their requests to God in thankful prayer will discover God's peace guarding their hearts through Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:6-7).

Study these descriptions of Jesus. They will help all of us to grow in appreciation of Him and long to grow closer to Him.

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Siwell Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

The God of Our Salvation

Marilyn LaStrape

Two words for the purpose and context of this article must be defined – "God" and "salvation." First, what does God say in self-revelation of Himself? There is a catalogue of passages. In Isaiah 43:10b-13 God declares, ***"'Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore, you are My witnesses,' says the LORD, 'that I am God.'"*** Psalm 90:2 declares, ***"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God."***

Second, what does "salvation" mean? According to *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy* by Wayne Jackson, "Salvation" is the result of having been "saved." "It could signify to deliver, to heal, to liberate, to preserve, etc., depending upon the context. Most prominently in the New Testament, salvation has to do with deliverance from the guilt and ultimate consequence (spiritual death) of sin. Ultimately, salvation is from God; no sinful creature has the ability to save himself (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5)."

We must realize and be eternally grateful that our **salvation is a divine achievement – not a human accomplishment**. None of us can save ourselves no matter how remorseful we may be for our sins! No matter how long we would pray to be forgiven, without the sacrifice of Jesus our righteousness is like a filthy rag! Isaiah 64:5-6 says, ***"You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, who remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned – in these ways we continue; and we need to be saved. But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."***

The God of our salvation has provided for us the way to avoid His wrath. Psalm 118:14, 21 states, ***"The LORD is my strength and song, and He has***

become my salvation." "I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation." **Salvation is a gift – God's most magnificent gift – but it must be unwrapped!** It must be unwrapped and the directions followed, which are obedience to the Gospel **and** a life of faithfulness unto death! Even if it causes our death, we must remain faithful to God. A careful reading of Revelation 2:10 will show us this passage says, ***"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."***

Psalm 68:19-20 reads, ***"Blessed be the LORD, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation. Our God is the God of our salvation and to God alone belong escapes from death."*** Salvation is the deliverance from the guilt and ultimate consequence of sin, which is the second death. We will all succumb to the first death, which is physical. However, it is totally our choice to avoid the second death, which is spiritual. **All people in Hell will be there because God simply honored their choice!** Second Peter 3:9 tells us, ***"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*** This longsuffering is God's ability to keep a forgiving, hopeful attitude toward us to keep from retaliating a wrong. Aren't we thankful for that!

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God's commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is when sin entered the world (Genesis 3). Genesis 6:5 states, ***"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*** Wayne Jackson wrote in *Fortify Your Faith*; "God has an intense and sustained disposition towards evil and those who abandon themselves to it."

We are living in an evil world and society; we are surrounded by hatred, violence, brutality and anarchy of every type imaginable! When this evil world and society begins to reap what it has sown, uprooting and dismantling our families and life as we know it, we may wonder when will our God step in to give all of us a **reality check**. It is at these times of stress and strain that we need to remember the more we know about God, the more we can and must trust Him. When He does just the opposite of

for what we prayed, all we need to do is continue to trust and to obey Him. We must realize in all that God does, in all that He allows, He is always pursuing our salvation. We must trust God to a degree that we may have never trusted Him before. We must know that whatever happens, God always knows what He is doing. His redemptive purpose in the world will never be slowed down, obstructed and certainly not stopped, because sin entering the world cost His Son His life!

God says what He means and means what He says. He declared in Isaiah 46:11b, ***"…Indeed I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it."*** When God has purposed ***"it,"*** whatever ***"it"*** is, that settles it! **Even if everything appears to be falling apart, we must continue to have faith and trust in the God of our salvation!**

In his book, *Hear My Cry O Lord*, Randy Becton made these observations."

> With the authority of God, Jesus entered a world enslaved by Satan. His victories over the power of evil are not just isolated invasions of Satan's realm. They are the manifestations of the beginning of the end for Satan and the dawn of salvation. Jesus announced the kingdom and revealed that the reign of God had begun — a time when His salvation comes personally to mankind. Salvation is here through the forgiveness of sins.✝

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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.**

COME — See Where He Lay

Betty Burton Choate

He was the Son of God
Yet he was born in a stable
And that soft baby form
left its first imprint
In a bed of straw.
Come — see where He lay.

Little boy feet pattered around
In the dust of Nazareth.
Then, leaving that home
with its childish mat,
The noble head of the Man
Found rest with friends
In Cana of Galilee,
At Peter's house,
Then in a boat, storm-swept and dark.
Judean roads knew His footprints
And the way to Bethlehem;
Mary and Martha made a place,
Simon and others too,
But all were borrowed,
No house was His own.
Come — see where He lay.

Then later —
After the dark,
After the cross
that was mine,
Not His,
His body was lowered
With gentle hands
To the grieving earth He'd made


And friends brought spices
And linen cloth
And laid Him in Joseph's tomb.
Come — see where He lay.
How did He feel,
This King of kings,
Living a pauper's life
Leaving His footprints
On borrowed ground
Leaving His blood
on a wooden cross
In the world His hands had made?
Come — see where He lay.

Were New Testament Writers Mistaken?

Colin McKee

Some say that New Testament writers, like John, James, Paul and Peter, taught and believed that Christ's coming again was imminent in the first century. If they taught and believed that, they were mistaken because it did not happen. Would God allow His inspired writers to believe and teach something that was not true?

In 1 John 2:18, John wrote, ***"It is the last hour,"*** and then, he added that he knew it was the last hour because the anti-Christ had come. Did John mean to teach that the Second Coming of Christ was just at hand? If that is the meaning of the phrase, then he made a mistake because almost 2,000 years have transpired, and the world is still standing.

Peter made a similar statement in his first epistle, ***"The end of all things is at hand"*** (1 Peter 4:7). James wrote in James 5:8, ***"The coming of the Lord is at hand."*** Did these inspired writers err about what was soon to happen? Did they believe that the return of the Lord and the end of time on earth was soon to occur?

The phrase ***"at hand"*** is found in other New Testament passages, and it always means something that is very near to occurring. Inspired men taught that something was about to happen, not something that would occur thousands of years in the future: Matthew 3:2 – ***"The kingdom of heaven is at hand,"*** Matthew 25:46 – ***"He who betrays me is at hand"*** and Romans 13:12 – ***"The night is far spent, the day is at hand."*** These are a sampling of passages with the phrase ***"is at hand."*** Others could be cited.

So, when Peter said, ***"The end of all things is at hand,"*** he must have meant that something extremely significant was about to happen. He was not referring to the end of the world, but Peter likely referred to the end of the Jewish system, or the end of things as those of the first century

had experienced up to that time. He could possibly have referred to the destruction of Jerusalem and its impact on the world of that day, or to persecutions that Christians faced at the time. He could have meant that the way they had lived and conducted their lives and the world in which they lived was about to be drastically changed.



Paul wrote, ***"In the last days perilous times will come"*** (2 Timothy3:1). Christ said to His apostles, ***"The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service"*** (John 16:2), and He told the Samaritan woman, ***"The hour is coming and now is"*** (John 4:21, 23) when He expressed the truth concerning the worship that God accepts.

When we put all of this together, Paul said perilous times would come ***"In the last days"*** (2 Timothy 3:1). John said the anti-Christ had come and that it was a critical perilous time, ***"The last hour."*** James said, ***"The coming of the Lord is at hand,"*** evidently meaning some kind of judgment was about to be executed. All of these passages were written before the destruction of Jerusalem and at a time when Christians were undergoing persecution; they could have referred to either or both of those two things. Christ came in judgment on nations in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13; 19:1) riding on a swift cloud. He came in judgment on Jerusalem because of its rejection of the Gospel. Matthew 24:30 reads, ***"The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*** That was not a

personal coming but a coming in judgment.

Since the world did not come to an end in the first century, and something was ***"at hand,"*** that occurrence was described as ***"the last hour."*** Those phrases must refer to a critical situation of the first century when persecution, a great upheaval of that time and danger of death for Christians were imminent. John wasn't saying that the end of time on earth was rapidly approaching, because that is still yet future. As an inspired writer, he knew there was no way to predict the coming of Christ, so how could he have referred to that? By using the phrase ***"last hour,"*** John must have meant that it was a critical time of urgency and that they needed to be prepared for whatever was coming. We use the phrase "the eleventh hour" to refer to something highly important that is about to happen, or something impending that requires urgent attention. If John had said it is "the eleventh hour," we would understand that he was referring to a critical situation that demanded particular attention and action. What is the "eleventh hour"? It is the ***"last hour"*** before time reaches its zenith or culmination at 12 o'clock whether noon or midnight. That is how John used ***"the last hour,"*** saying that anti-Christs had arrived, and it was a do or die situation; we cannot sit idly by and allow them free course. That is why James could say in James 5:8, ***"The coming of the Lord is at hand."*** Those things to which they referred indeed took place not long after they wrote their messages. It was either the destruction of Jerusalem and the widespread upheaval that event would cause in their world, or something else so drastic that it would impact the church with tremendous effect.

Yes, the writers, and the church taught and knew that Christ **could** come at any time, just as we teach and believe today, but they neither taught nor believed that His coming and the end of time was rapidly approaching in the first century. With this understanding, the veracity of those inspired writers cannot be challenged. They were not deluded about the coming of the Lord and the end of the world. They were referring to events that actually transpired in their time.

Colin McKee has been involved in mission work in Indonesia for many years.

Reaping What Is Sown



Eddie Cooper

The Bible says, ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"*** (Galatians 6:7 NKJV). This is true physically. One cannot sow potatoes and from that planting reap beans. This principle of reaping according to what is sown is also true spiritually. The Bible says the seed of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). If this seed (the Word of God) is planted in the 21st Century, it will produce the same thing it produced when planted in the first century – Christians and Christians only.

When something other than the Word of God is sown in the hearts of people, something alien to the Word of God will be reaped. When the doctrines and the traditions of men are sown in human hearts, the result will be plants that the heavenly Father has not planted (Matthew 15:9). One cannot teach only the Word of God and produce anything except New Testament Christians. The seed of the kingdom will produce neither anything more nor less than members of the kingdom. The reason there are so many different churches today is because something other than the Word of God has been sown.

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



Rebecca Rushmore

1. Name the two wives of Elkanah.
2. Where was the ark of the covenant before it was brought to the battle with the Philistines?
3. What Philistine idol fell when in the presence of the ark of the covenant?
4. Name the sons of Samuel who were evil judges over Israel.
5. Name the father and tribe of Israel's first king.
6. Who chose Saul to be the king?
7. Who had enough faith in God to state, "For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few"?
8. Which king did Saul spare despite God's command to kill him?
9. Which daughter did Saul first promise to give to David as a wife?
10. How did Saul die?

(answers inside back cover)

Who Is a Christian?

Rodney Nulph

A person does not have to go far in the world today to hear the word "Christian" being used to refer to a host of people. In fact, it is used to describe almost anyone who is even the least bit moral. Other times, Christian is used to describe a person in contrast to a Muslim or a Buddhist. Often, our nation is referred to as a Christian nation. However, the way the world defines a particular word is not always the same way God defines that word. Then, from God's perspective, who is a Christian? As we consider this important subject, please remember, it is not you or me who decides who is a Christian, but God and His Word will clearly make that determination! So, who is a Christian?

The Fallacies

Sadly, many in our world today think they are Christians simply because they **believe** something about Jesus. However, we can know that this is not the case, for God's Word reminds, ***"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue"*** (John 12:42). "Just believe" many will tout, but they clearly forget James' warning, ***"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble"*** (James 2:19).

Some claim to be Christians simply because they are **religious**. However, God's Word reminds us of a man who traveled to Jerusalem from Ethiopia just to worship, and he was still not a Christian until he obeyed Scripture (Acts 8:26-39). Others are certain they are Christians because they are **moral** people. Again, God is clear that morality alone does not make one a Christian (Acts 10:1-2; 22; 48; 11:14). What about **sincerity**? Surely if someone is sincere, he or she is a Christian, right? No one was as sincere as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 26:9-11; Philippians 3:4-6), and yet, prior to his obedience, he was not a Christian! Some will courageously claim

Christianity because they have been **baptized**, but again, God's Word proves that baptism **alone** does not make one a Christian (Acts 19:1-5).

The Facts

In order to become a New Testament Christian in God's eyes, one must do what the New Testament says to do. Paul wrote that Christians are disciples and are also members of the church (Acts 11:26). Disciples or Christians are those who have obeyed from the heart a particular ***"form"*** or pattern of doctrine (Romans 6:1-18). Christians are not made by *just getting wet*. Christians are people who have obeyed the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). They are those who have been saved from their past sins (Ephesians 1:7) and have been added to Christ's body, the church (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23). They are those who have heard the Gospel (Romans 10:17), believed and continue to believe in the risen Lord (John 8:24), repented and continue to repent of sin (Acts 17:30), have publicly confessed their faith in Jesus (Matthew 16:16; Romans 10:9-10) and have been immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:48). According to God, these are Christians. Please note carefully that it is not you or I who determine or make the standard! It is God and God alone! Therefore, I must make certain that I do not go ***"beyond that which is written"*** (1 Corinthians 4:6) when it comes to defining who is a Christian! Simply take God at His Word!

The Faithful

Once a person does what God has clearly outlined in the New Testament, he or she is always a Christian; that never changes. Sadly, what does change sometimes is one's faithfulness. Just because a person obeys from the heart the pattern God gave does not mean he or she will continue to obey for life (2 Peter 2:20-22). Every Christian has a daily choice to make! Faithfulness or unfaithfulness! Paul was so clear that disciples (learners, followers) were also Christians and were also the same ones who ***"assembled with the church"*** (Acts 11:26). What if a person no longer assembles with the church; is he still faithful? Barring

any *out of their control* issues (e.g., homebound, sickness, etc.), the clear, biblical answer is, "**No**." Faithfulness involves assembling (Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 10:25) and encouraging other brothers and sisters (Hebrews 3:13; 10:23-24). Sadly, some believe they can have Jesus without His church. However, the body and the Head are inseparable (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).



We must never forget that God and His Word alone define who is a Christian and who is not. When our Lord returns to judge the living and the dead (2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1), He will return to take faithful Christians home to Heaven (John 14:1-6). Those who have not obeyed the Gospel and those who have turned from that obedience will suffer eternal damnation (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Peter 2:20-22). No excuse will permit a change in those facts. So, then, the question comes to you and me. Who is a Christian? Are you?

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

Baptism and Obtaining a Clear Conscience

Nat Evans

In order to arrive at truth on any subject, we must bring an open mind to the examination of the Word of God. We must determine that the Bible will be allowed to settle all questions. It and it alone will be the final source of authority in all matters of faith and practice (Romans 4:3; Galatians 4:30; 2 Timothy 3:l6-17; 2 Peter 1:3). This approach to the sacred oracles rules out any appeal to creed books or any appeal to loyalty to ancestors over and above the Bible (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:6-9). Come to the Word and study for yourself (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11).

We learn from Hebrews 11:6 that it is impossible for a man to come to God without faith. Paul taught in Romans 10:17, ***"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*** He told the Ephesians, ***"The sword of the Spirit is the word of God"*** (Ephesians 6:17). We learn some of the power of that Word in Hebrews 4:12 and Romans 1:16. The Word of God, then, is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit operates on the spiritual heart of man (whether alien or Christian).

God appointed faith to change the spiritual heart of man through teaching (Romans 10:17), then repentance to change the life (Matthew 21:28-31; 3:8), confession of faith in Christ as a declaration of change in allegiance (Matthew 10:32-33) and baptism into Christ to change one's state or relationship (Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:26-27). Baptism does not change one's heart. It does not change one's life. It does not make an impenitent man a penitent man. Both faith and repentance must precede baptism (Acts 2:38). Some of our own brethren need to realize this.

I call your attention to 1 Peter 3:21, which reads, ***"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by***



the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Notice that by the obedience of faith in immersion one is able to obtain a clear conscience before God. In scriptural baptism, one is able to change the conscience. What does this mean in reality? It means that one who has not been scripturally baptized cannot in reality have a clear conscience before God.

Now there are men who are like Saul was before he obeyed the Gospel in Acts 22:16. They believe they are safe. Their consciences are clear, but they are deceived (Acts 23:1). Sin causes a guilty conscience. Remission of sins is the only means of obtaining a good one in the right way. Gospel obedience with 1 Peter 3:21 completing the picture shows how this is done today. Romans 6:3-4 with Revelation 1:5 show us that it is actually the blood of Christ that saves, that cleanses us from our sins, but it is when a penitent believer who has confessed his faith in his Lord is baptized into Christ that he reaches the benefits of that cleansing blood of the Redeemer.

Peter, the same writer, said in Acts 2:38, ***"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins."*** Again, I want us to see that sin is the cause of a guilty conscience and that scriptural baptism is the final act that puts the obedient believer into possession of the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). This promise of remission of sins through the power of the blood of Christ gives to the obedient believer a clear conscience before God (1 Peter 3:21). Please do not miss the point that obedience in immersion is the medium through which this blessing is obtained and enjoyed. My friends, Hebrews 10:22 teaches exactly the same thing (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 5:26-27).

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

(Hebrews 9:11-15)

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

This passage in Hebrews 9, coupled with verses in chapter 10, open a powerful thought for God's children. Under the Old Testament law, the priests offered daily sacrifices for the sins of the people, but once a year another monumental offering was made: the High Priest pulled back the veil, opening the way to "the Holy of Holies" where he made the greatest of the sacrifices for the sins of the people.

These verses in Hebrews say that — once, and for all people, and for all time — our Lord entered the spiritual equivalent of "the Holy of Holies" — going into God's presence, Himself, and He poured out His blood as the ultimate offering for our sins! But wait — His blood was poured out, but it was ***"...through the eternal Spirit"*** that the real offering was made! Shedding His physical blood, as was done with animal sacrifices fulfilled the "shadow" of the offering that had been pictured through the ages, but the ***real offering*** was not only through His body but also through His Eternal Spirit! The sins of humanity were laid against the Spirit of our Lord, and He paid to wipe away those sins by His eternal commitment to be our Lord and Brother — being a joint heir with us for eternity!

God's Orchestra!

Chuck Taylor



You mean that any little congregation holds the power of God's Word? Yes, it does! We don't need to worry about being like other folks. The power of God is held in the Truth, and each member holds within his or her hands the demonstration of that Truth in obedience.

Another significant point pertaining to the body of Christ is that we members or Christians function as an orchestrated group that lacks nothing. As an orchestra has many pieces –violins, horns, drums, etc. – so it is with the church. Notice what Paul had to say in 1 Corinthians 12:13-19.

> ***For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not***

a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? (NKJV)

There are many talents but one body! We should look at ourselves as one member of this grand orchestra. Each of us has an important and a unique position within the body. God expects us to use our talents for the betterment of the body. One member is not more prominent than the next member, and yet, no one is less essential to our needs than another. Consider that we are many members, but we operate and function as one.

It is also our duty to support one another. When one is down, the others lift him or her up. Notice Romans 12:15, where it says, ***"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."*** One can count on the body of Christ! Working together, we can beautifully accomplish the work, being led by our Conductor – Jesus Christ. Think about it!

Chuck Taylor is a deacon for the Rapid City Church of Christ in Rapid City, South Dakota, USA.

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What's the Difference between the Church of Christ and Denominations?

Brian R. Kenyon

From time to time, church members will be asked a question similar to the title of this article. There are many ways in which this can be answered, such as only the church of Christ started at **the right time** (Daniel 2:44), in **the right place** (Jerusalem, Luke 24:49; cf. Isaiah 2:3; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47), by **the right person** (Jesus, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23) and with **the right doctrine** (Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 16:16-18). No denomination can claim any of these points! However, there is one single Bible verse that also totally exposes the difference between the church of Christ and all denominations.

Colossians 3:17

The most concise yet comprehensive way to answer the question is to accept and apply what Colossians 3:17 teaches. This verse reads, ***"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"*** (NKJV).

Notice the three statements in the beginning of this verse that show how much an individual or a group of individuals calling themselves a church must do by the authority of Jesus Christ: (1) ***"whatever you do"*** leaves nothing out; (2) ***"in word or deed"*** includes everything, even thoughts, because they determine speech and actions, and (3) ***"do all"*** encompasses everything. Any one of these statements by itself would teach that Jesus' authority is needed for everything we do, but when the God-breathed Scriptures give that scope three times in one verse, there is an undeniable emphasis: **everything** we do, must be done with God's authority! Understanding and applying these three practically

synonymous statements is the key to distinguishing the difference between denominations and the faithful church of Christ!

The phrase, ***"in the name of the Lord Jesus,"*** means that everything a church or an individual does must have the authority of Jesus (Acts 3:6; 9:29; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; James 5:10). He has been given ***"all authority"*** (Matthew 28:18). Anything a church does that cannot be supported by New Testament authority is sinful and thereby reflects denominationalism. For example, many denominational churches will claim their authority for using mechanical instruments of music in worship is found in David and in the Psalms (81:2; 98:6; 149:3; 150:1-6). However, whether David was actually commanded to use them in worship or in some other setting is irrelevant to New Testament worship. **Our authority must come from the New Testament.** David and the Psalms are Old Testament. There is no authority for using instruments in worship today!

There is also a huge misconception in denominationalism that ***"in the Lord"*** simply means dedicating a certain action to the Lord, thereby making that action right and acceptable to God. I have heard sincere members of denominations say, "God has blessed me with this ability to play the piano, so He must be pleased and honored when I use that talent in worship to Him, in His name." The problem with this kind of reasoning is that it is not humanity's place to determine what pleases God! It is God's call, and He has told us through His written Word, the Bible, what pleases Him. We must worship God by what He says (John 4:23-24), not by what we desire or think is appropriate (Matthew 15:8-9; John 4:22; Acts 17:23; Colossians 2:20-23).

A person's claiming to do something "in Jesus' name" does not mean that he or she is truly doing something in His name (i.e., by His authority). Consider Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount.

> ***Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from***

Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Notice how they called Jesus, ***"Lord, Lord,"*** but that did not really mean He was their Lord (cf., Luke 6:46). Notice also how they claimed three times to have done remarkable things ***"in Your name,"*** yet Jesus responded, ***"I never knew you."*** Why? Obviously, because they did not truly follow the Father's commands (Matthew 7:21). What we think are good works may not be what God determines to be good works. Again, just because people claim to do something ***"in the name of the Lord"*** does not mean they are actually doing it with His authority!

Conclusion

There is a difference between denominational churches and the church of Christ, and, rest assured, **that difference matters eternally!** We must study the New Testament to know the truth about what the church is and what God actually authorizes for His church (2 Timothy 2:15). Equipped with that knowledge, we can discern whether a group of people calling themselves a church is just another denomination or truly the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28), to which He adds the saved (Acts 2:47) and for whom He will come again to take to be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Sometimes, this discerning should also be applied to those who assemble in buildings with "Church of Christ" lettered on their signs. The one test that will distinguish the true church from denominationalism is to see that ***"whatever*** [they] ***do in word or deed"*** is ***"all"*** done ***"in the name of the Lord."*** ✠

Brian R. Kenyon is the Director of the Florida School of Preaching in Lakeland, Florida, USA.

Cecil's COMMENTS

Have you noticed not one of the people advocating abortions were aborted?

Jesus Is King



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.

Thou Shalt Call and I Will Answer

Betty Burton Choate

Barry Epps



Chorus



Visit www.worldevangelism.org to hear this song.

Order

It's not the storm alone
That brings the growth,
But sunshine after rain;
It's not the tears alone
That form the soul
But gladness after pain.

Betty Burton Choate

Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs

Sunny David

When Christ in the beginning established His church, as He had promised in Matthew 16:18, Christians sang psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in the worship of God, without the use of any kind of instruments of music. They were taught, ***"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"*** (Colossians 3:16). Likewise, Christians in Ephesus were instructed, ***"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:19).

The Roman Catholic church began hundreds of years after the establishment of the church of Christ, and eventually, it began to use mechanical instruments of music in its worship. In the beginning of the 16th century when the Protestant movement started, founders and leaders of prominent denominational churches, including Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley, spoke against the use of instruments of music in the worship of God.

Christ taught, ***"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"*** (John 4:24). God desires that people, whom He created, should worship Him with their hearts and lips, which God made, and not through musical instruments that man made. Hebrews 13:15 teaches, ***"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."***

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

[Editor's Note: The foregoing is part of the introduction appearing in a new Hindi and English languages songbook published in New Delhi, India. The encouragement to refrain from using instrumenal music in Christian worship is very appropriate and biblically based. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

The Support of the Public Services of the Church

Ronald D. Reeves

The ideal congregation faithfully supports the various public services of the church. Even though multiple weekly services have not been mandated by the divine will, the availability of multiple services provides valuable opportunities both to worship and to be spiritually edified. Motivations to obey the biblical mandate of Hebrews 10:24-25 are abundant. By so doing, one:

- obeys the command to study (2 Timothy 2:15),
- better possesses the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5),
- is better able to always give an answer for the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15),
- has opportunity to express thanks to and faith in our Father (Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 11:6),
- is more diligent (2 Peter 1:5),
- is better able to grow spiritually (2 Peter 3:18),
- may deepen fellowship with brethren (1 Corinthians 12:14),
- is edified (Ephesians 4:12),
- may exorcize the love of the world (1 John 2:15-17) and
- will be present in the habitat of the Lord (Matthew 18:20).

Though biblically mandated, let us assemble regularly because of our responsive love unto the Lord (1 John 4:19), which compels us unto good works (Ephesians 2:10).

Ronald D. Reeves is a longtime preacher who lives in Arkansas, USA.

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My Grace Is Sufficient

David Myers

When we pray to God, sometimes asking for something very specific from Him, and He seems to say, "No, I won't do that," we can misinterpret His ultimate intention. Rather than accepting His answer in faith and realizing He knows what is best for us, we can have mixed feelings about God and miss the reason why He said "No" to our request.

This reminds me about a little boy who was afraid during a thunderstorm. His mother came into his room, knowing that he was afraid, and tucked him into bed to calm his fears. She was about to turn the light off when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you stay with me all night?" The mother gave him a warm, reassuring hug and said tenderly, "I can't, dear. I have to sleep in Daddy's room." After a brief pause, the boy replied, "The big sissy!"

This is a humorous little story, but from the point it makes, it reminds us of what the apostle Paul faced as a servant in the kingdom of God. He went through many periods of persecution and hardship because of his faith in Jesus. When he asked the Lord to take away ***"a thorn in the flesh,"*** for which he pleaded three times that it might depart from him, the Lord told him, ***"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"*** (2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NKJV). God's ultimate intention was to help Paul realize that he was secure in the promise of His provision, without demanding something more. The grace that was already given to him was enough. As we grow step by step in our relationship with the Lord, hopefully we will learn that the best answer to some of our prayers is His gracious, "No."

David Myers preaches for the Church of Christ in Wildwood, Florida, USA. He is also a missionary to Guyana, South America.

[Editor's Note: All prayerful requests made by faithful Christians are answered, though we might not welcome God's responses since they may differ from our desires. God may say, "Yes," when He gives us whatever it is for which we prayed on our timetable – usually, immediately – if not sooner! "No," of course, is when that for which we prayed does not occur. Yet, God may effectively also respond with "Later," "Maybe" (conditionally) or partly as we want. Yes, God may have something else in mind for us, for which reason He may not grant our prayer requests. ***"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us"*** **(1 John 5:14). ~ Louis Rushmore]**



I Don't Know What to Pray About

David Conley

Is this sometimes how you feel? Do you stop to pray and suddenly **go blank** because you don't know about what to pray? In our "Men's Training Class," we saw a chart by Robert Hawkins that was published in 1960 in *The Christian Teacher Magazine.* I think it is very helpful.

Adoration (addressed and praise to God)

Confession (of sins and shortcomings)

Thanksgiving (for blessings received)

Supplication (petition for things needed)

There is no way we will **go blank** if, when we pray, we pray about all of these points! The next time you pray, think of **ACTS!**

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

Train Up a Child

Kevin L. Moore



"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings intended to convey general truths, and heeding these words of wisdom will surely help guide one's life in a positive direction. However, **the overabundant variables and uncertainties of this world preclude taking each proverb in an absolute sense as though the wise sayings were meant as inflexible rules with definitive outcomes and no possible exceptions.**

Note, for example, Proverbs 10:4, which states, ***"He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich."*** While this principle is generally true, mitigating circumstances could result in a lazy person being rich (e.g., by way of inheritance) and a diligent person being poor (e.g., via drought or stock market crash). Nevertheless, potential exemptions do not discount the wisdom of the stated proverb.

Proverbs 22:6 affirms a general truth that ought to be heeded, although the freewill choices of each individual child means there will almost certainly be exceptions (cf., Genesis 4:1-7; Isaiah 1:2). Remember

that the Bible is comprised of a variety of literary categories (historical, instructional, legislative, poetic, etc.), and not all are meant to be read and applied the same way. The books of Proverbs and Leviticus, for instance, represent very different types of literature and, therefore, should be interpreted accordingly.

Parents, let us ensure that the Lord's ways are always upheld and observed in our homes and that our children are brought up in His training and admonition (Ephesians 6:4), by which we encourage other parents to do the same. May the seeds of truth planted with discipline and love in impressionable hearts conquer stubborn, rebellious spirits. Let us be grateful when our children cooperate and the words of Proverbs 22:6 play out in our families. Yet, may we be sympathetic and supportive of mothers and fathers and grandparents and guardians whose hearts are otherwise broken, praying that implanted seeds take root and guide straying loved ones back to the faith (Luke 15:11-32).

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The Brevity of Life

Picture steam coming out of a teapot, how quickly it dissipates into the air and disappears! The Bible says, ***"What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"*** (James 4:14 ESV). ***"All flesh is like grass and all of its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever"*** (1 Peter 1:24). ***"And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever"*** (1 John 2:17).



How to Show Our Children that We Respect Them

T. Pierce Brown

Having just returned from a meeting in Florida, and preparing to leave for one in Alabama, I found a request from Brother Warren to have this article on his desk in about 20 days. So, I suggested to my wife, Tomijo, that she write it, and I would review it and take credit! I thought that would be appropriate, since most of the credit I have received over the years is due to her anyway! She declined but did suggest most of the points herein discussed. My invitation to her was actually an illustration of our **first point**.

In Matthew 25:14-30, we find a principle that illustrates how to show our children (or wives) that we respect them. That is, ask for the accomplishment of a difficult or challenging task, commensurate with their ability or talent. Have and express to them a "you-can-do-it" attitude. When we expect the best from them, we not only show them respect, we teach them God's will regarding work and help them to have a good self-image.



Second, give special privileges on special occasions, when special efforts are made or as goals are achieved. One needs to be careful not to do this in such a way that it seems to be a bribe to do good or to be good. Yet, it is important to show proper respect and appreciation in this way.

Third, in Matthew 23:23, the Lord said, ***"Well done, good and faithful servant."*** We need to praise work well done or even an honest effort to do it well. We find Paul using this principle in almost every epistle. We need to teach the child that he is not a failure, although he will fail at something.

Fourth, ask for their input, impression or advice in decisions that affect them. Since they may have some fresh and useful ideas, do so with genuine interest. How much weight you give that opinion may depend on how mature or sound it is, but you should listen with care. If you cannot use the advice, try to explain why, for if one asks for advice, and then does not pay any attention to it, more harm than good may result.

Fifth, never ridicule any serious question, no matter how immature it may sound. This is not to be confused with Paul's admonition in Titus 3:9, ***"Avoid foolish questions."*** A question is not foolish if it is important to the child to find the proper answer. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul said, ***"Let no man despise thy youth."*** If you ridicule or show lack of respect in this regard, you may leave serious doubts or moral problems hidden until too late to deal properly with them.

Sixth, a very broad principle is found in Ephesians 6:4, which reads, ***"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."*** This includes "talking down" to them, implying that they are second-class persons. We have heard parents talk about their children in their presence as if they were not there or as if they were pieces of furniture. Simply having courtesy, practicing the "golden rule," would prevent a parent from provoking his children to wrath by telling an embarrassing fact about them.

Seventh, 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15; Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6 and many other such passages indicate the value of having them participate regularly in family devotionals – reading, praying, studying and making comments about Bible principles. As in most other suggestions given, this has a greater effect than simply showing respect for them. It develops spiritual

insight, encourages growth, teaches self-respect and increases godliness.

Eighth, Solomon suggested a principle in Proverbs 13:24; 23:13 and other places we need to include. We need to discipline properly, including punishment under some circumstances. There are many testimonies of children that show that they appreciate their parents and teachers respecting them enough to discipline them.

Although personal examples may not always be fitting, we think this one is, for the principle is found in God giving His Son as a vicarious sacrifice, taking punishment for our sins. We had told our oldest son, when he was about 5 years old, not to ride his tricycle down the hill. He disobeyed and was corrected. The third time, I took my belt and said, "Frank, I love you very much. Someone has to suffer when a person does wrong. I do not want to spank you again, so you must spank me." He cried out, "No, daddy, please!" I replied, "Yes, you have to learn that wrong demands punishment." He hit once and began to cry. I said, "Twice more." He hit me the second time, then threw the belt across the room and screamed, "Oh, please, daddy, I will never do it again!" I took him in my arms, cried with him, but did not have to correct him again for a long time. The point is that discipline must be done, but in such a way that they know it is not in mere anger, resentment or frustration but that love and respect for them and their character causes it.

Ninth, James 5:16 also applies with parents and children. ***"Confess your faults one to another."*** When you are wrong, even when you discipline your child improperly, admit it, ask for forgiveness and pray with and about the child regarding that mistake or wrong.

Tenth, you cannot show your children you have respect for them unless you have shown them you have respect for yourself. Show them that you know that both you and they were made in the image of God (1 Corinthians 15:49), and thus have respect for both your body and mind, for your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Friends with Daggers

Rebecca Rushmore



An interesting email caught my eye on March 15. "On this day in 44 B.C., Julius Caesar died surrounded by friends. Unfortunately for him, his friends had daggers." Following this eye-catching statement, the advertisement promoted fiction and nonfiction works about Julius Caesar. After some reflection, I noted the Bible addresses friendships by providing examples, instructions and warnings.

Examples

First Samuel 18:1-4 describes the beginning of a close friendship between David and Jonathan. The two remained steadfast friends despite knowing David would one day become king instead of Saul's son, Jonathan (1 Samuel 23:16-17). The friendship even survived many attempts King Saul made on David's life (1 Samuel 19:2; 20:17-23). After Jonathan's death, David kept his promises to show kindness to Jonathan's family (1 Samuel 20:14-16, 41-42; 2 Samuel 9).

Jesus had many friends. John 11 indicates He shared a friendship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus (see also Luke 10:38). When Jesus met with Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration, He took with Him Peter, James and John (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took these same three a little farther into the Garden before He went even deeper into the Garden to pray (Matthew 26:36-46). On the cross, Jesus placed His mother into the care of John, ***"whom He loved"*** (John 19:26). Though Jesus loves everyone (John 3:16), these verses indicate He had a special friendship with some individuals while on earth.

Daily Christian Living

Instructions

The Book of Proverbs provides many insights into friendships. Friends love or have affection for each other (17:17). They are friendly (18:24) and tell the truth even when it hurts (27:6). Friends can make each other better (27:17).

Similar sentiments also appear in the New Testament. Christians are instructed to show affection for each other and to prefer the company of other Christians (Acts 2:42-46; Romans 12:10). God's children should display the qualities of kindness and forgiveness to others (Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12-13; 2 Peter 1:5-7). Additionally, Christians are to comfort and support each other (Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11) while they ***"consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"*** (Hebrews 10:24). For other traits needed in friendships, search the New Testament for ***"one another"*** passages. Without such characteristics, there can be no true friendship.

Warnings



God warned the Israelites against making covenants (friendships) with the idolatrous people of Canaan (Exodus 23:32; Deuteronomy 7:1-5). He forbade these relationships so His people would not be led into sinful practices (Exodus 23:33). However, the Israelites did not follow God's commands and were led into idolatry (Judges 2:1-3, 11-13).

Other Scriptures warn against forming friendships with the ungodly. ***"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray"*** (Proverbs 12:26). ***"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'"*** (1 Corinthians 15:33). Psalm 1:1 encourages God's people to avoid the advice of the ungodly, and Exodus 23:2 forbids one to ***"follow a crowd to do evil."*** First John 2:15-16 states, ***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the***

Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world." Those who make friends with the world make themselves enemies of God. ***"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"*** (James 4:4). Friends of the world wield daggers at the faithfulness of Christians.

With or Without Daggers?

The Bible describes Abraham as a ***"friend of God"*** (James 2:23; see also 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8). Exodus 33:11 declares that God spoke to Moses ***"as a man speaks to his friend."*** Jesus stated that those who obey His commands are His friends (John 15:14), and John wrote that friends of God will overcome the world (1 John 5:1-5). True and lasting friendships have God and Christ at their center. Any other relationship is the equivalent of having "friends with daggers." Choose your friends wisely.

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Robison's Rubies

I believe in God because of morality. Everybody has some idea of what is right and what is wrong. Why is this the case? Do chemicals mix together and give the ability to reason, think and feel pleasure over a good action and guilt over a bad one? Nothing comes from nothing. From where did this ability come? Everyone might define morality differently nowadays, but all admit there is a straight way and there is a crooked way. Why? If there is no God, everyone can do his own thing. Yet, the very idea of right presupposes there must be a higher power, simply because no one person or group defines right. I don't, and, respectfully, you don't. Proverbs 16:25 notices, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Since there is right and wrong, there has to be a God.

Seven Desires of Every Heart (Part 3)

Wayne Burger

Affirmation

Studies show that every person has seven basic needs to be a well-rounded, fully satisfied, mentally healthy individual. One of those needs is affirmation. Affirmation means to be loved and accepted as having worth and value.

One authority in this field writes, "We are relational beings. Through and through… The same thing keeps showing up as the single most influential contributor to our overall happiness and well-being 'relationships.' Real live relationships. Authentic, genuine relationships. People with whom we feel loved and accepted for truly being ourselves."

That writer went on to say, "But unfortunately, in our society, relationships like this are becoming more and more of a scarcity." Why? "Too busy, too many social media 'friends' and not enough real ones, too much emphasis in our culture on being independent, striving too hard to get rich and not taking time for one another."

> We are relational by nature, and contrary to popular belief, we actually DO need one another. Not in a needy, unhealthy, or co-dependent way, but in a healthy mutually beneficial, giving, nurturing, fulfilling and rewarding way. In an authentic and reciprocal way. We need each other… one of the forefathers of modern psychology, Alfred Adler so wisely stated: "*Genuine human connection is as essential to our existance* (Sic) *as air and water.*" (The quotes above come from Julia Kristina and Associates, a team of Vancouver-based Clinical Counsellors who have specialties that include treating Anxiety, Depression, Stress, Overwhelm, Self-Esteem Issues, Grief & Trauma.)

Application

Christ and His church (His body) provide every one of these seven needs. No one can give us "affirmation" like Christ and His followers. There is no greater affirmation of our self-worth than what God foretold about us. ***"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"*** (Genesis 1:26). We are like God! There can be nothing greater than that! We are spirit as God is spirit (John 4:24). God is eternal and the soul of each person becomes immortal from the moment of conception. Our self-worth is not based on the degree of wealth we have, nor the color of our skin, nor where we live. Our self-worth does not solely depend on what folks think or say about us or to us. We should not let others destroy our self-worth. God has affirmed it; no one can unaffirm it. [The difference between "eternal" and "immortal" for our purposes here is that eternal has no beginning and no end, whereas "immortal" has a beginning and no end. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Affirmation by Recreation

If our creation where we are made in the image of God was not enough, God enables us to be recreated. As we stray from God, which destroys our feeling of affirmation, so God has a plan where we can be recreated. ***"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit"*** (Titus 3:5). Our sins tarnish our affirmation, but God provides a way we can be born again (regeneration) and realize to a greater degree the great blessing of being affirmed even after our sinful behavior. In Christ we become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Affirmation by the Body of Christ

One of the reasons that individuals do not feel affirmed is because those around us attack us verbally, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In the church – the body of Christ – we have fellowship with men and women of like mind who are going to affirm our affirmation.

Let me repeat what authorities say is the reason society does not affirm us. "But unfortunately, in our society, relationships like this are becoming more

and more of a scarcity." Why? "Too busy, too many social media 'friends' and not enough real ones, too much emphasis in our culture on being independent, striving too hard to get rich and not taking time for one another."

The church today needs to be what the first century church was. Luke said, ***"And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul"*** (Acts 4:32). The writers of the Bible urge us to continue being ***"of one heart and soul."*** We affirm each other by following the exhortation Paul gave as he said, ***"Make my joy complete being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others"*** (Philippians 2:2-4). As we do that for others, we give them the affirmation they need. As they do that for us, they give us the affirmation we need. Only in the church!

Conclusion

A basic need for everyone is affirmation. There is no greater affirmation than to realize we are made in the image of God, and even though we have sinned and fallen short of God's expectation, we can be recreated in the image of God's dear Son. Then, when we are added to the body of Christ, we will be surrounded by those of like mind where each will receive the affirmation he or she needs!

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Kenney's Pennies

"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" (2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV). Sadly, there was a lot of pain and misery before the nation did this. Eventually, they refused, and the nation was lost. Our nation is not lost, yet. It's time to focus more on our spiritual citizenship because that is the only hope for the present, earthly citizenship to better itself. Of course, our spiritual citizenship ought to be our primary focus anyway.



1. How was Paul feeling in his heart when he wrote an earlier letter? (2:4)
2. What did Paul want the Corinthians to know regarding his concern for them? (2:4)
3. What had someone caused the church, which prompted the writing of the earlier letter? (2:5)
4. What was he now urging the church to do to that man? (2:7)
5. What did Paul say he was going to do in regards to that situation? (2:10)
6. What did he say would happen if they were not all in agreement regarding that man? (2:11)
7. What did he say regarding our knowledge of Satan's devices? (2:11)
8. What happened when Paul came to Troas to preach the Gospel? (2:12)
9. Why did Paul say he had no rest in his spirit while in Troas? (2:13)
10. What did he say Christians were? (2:15)
11. What did Paul say he was not doing regarding the Gospel? (2:17)

(**See the back cover for answers.**)

Verse Search

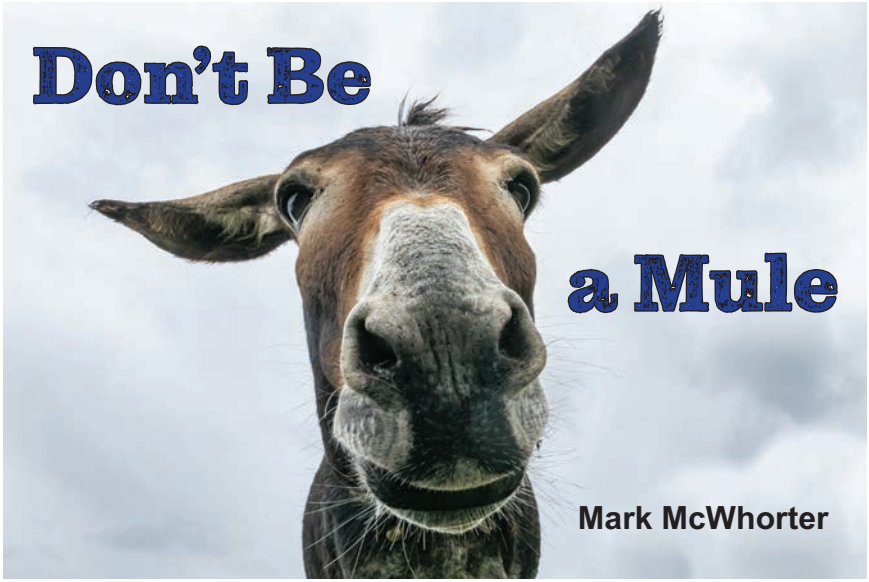
3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. **4** For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. **6** This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, **7** so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. **8** Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. **9** For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. **10** Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, **11** lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, **13** I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. **15** For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. **16** To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? **17** For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

NOTE: In this section, Paul mainly wrote concerning an earlier letter that he had written to the church in Corinth. Apparently, a member of the church had caused a great deal of grief to the church. We do not know who the persons was or what he did. Nevertheless, the church had disciplined that man upon Paul's instructions, and he had repented. Thus, Paul then urged the church to forgive, comfort and to reaffirm their love for that man. If they did not do this, then he would likely suffer too much and would once again leave the church. This gives us some idea of the reason for church discipline. It is done out of love, and the purpose is to bring one back through repentance. Once that outcome is achieved, the church is obligated to forgive and accept one back fully into fellowship. No further punishment is desired or needed. If the church does not do so, Satan will use that to further afflict and harm the church. Paul said that we are not to be ignorant of Satan's schemes.



Mules are known for being stubborn. Many times, they will try to do exactly the opposite of what an owner wants. If the desire is to go forward, the mule will attempt to go backwards. If the owner wants to plow a field, the mule may decide to sit down.

Mules require a bit and bridle. The bit is a piece of wood or metal that fits in the mouth. It is hooked up to a bridle. The owner holds onto the bridle. It is usually straps of leather. The owner pulls on the bridle to indicate what he wants.

People are not supposed to need bits and bridles. God made people to think and to make rational spiritual decisions. People can read the Bible and learn how God expects them to live.

Psalm 32:9 reads, ***"Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you"*** (NKJV). God does not force people to come to Him. God wants us to desire to come to Him. The only way to do that is to study the Bible.

People are not supposed to need bits and bridles.

To **not** study the Bible, to **not** learn what to do, to **not** learn how to please God and to **not** obey God makes a person **a spiritual mule**. Who wants to be no smarter than a mule?

Study your Bible. Do not be a mule. Teach others so they will not be mules. If any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you. ✝

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Someone Needs to Know about Jesus

Cliff Holmes

Someone needs to know about Jesus, someone so lost in sin,
To experience the joy of salvation and new life in Christ to begin.

Will you tell the story of Jesus? Will you spread the most wonderful Word?
For many are groping in darkness, and so many have never heard.

Through Him sin's bonds are broken, and blind eyes are made to see.
So let the message be spoken, that sin's captives are forever free.

His light will drive away darkness and turn your dark night to day.
He will fill up our hearts with gladness, driving shadows of doubt away.

Come to the loving Savior, whom everyone needs to know,
Give your heart to the Master, and salvation He will bestow.





Grandpa wonders how much 6-year-old Tommy knows about money. Just for fun, he pulls two bills from his wallet – a ten and a twenty – and asks Tommy which one he'd rather have. Tommy grins and takes the ten dollar bill.

"Thanks, Grandpa!"

Grandpa thinks it's kinda funny, so he does it again. Again Tommy chooses the ten-dollar bill.

Grandpa calls over Uncle Joe and says, "Watch this." He again offers Tommy a ten and a twenty, and again Tommy chooses the ten.

Both men chuckle, and then call over Tommy's dad. Grandpa again offers a ten and a twenty, and Tommy gleefully takes the ten.

Dad takes Tommy aside. "Son, don't you know twenty is more than ten?"

"Sure," says Tommy. "But if I took the twenty, Grandpa wouldn't keep playing the game. Now I have forty dollars."



A country preacher went looking for a job. The elders finally interviewed him. They asked him, "Do you know much about the Bible?"

The preacher said, "Oh, yeah. I know the Bible through and through."

"What's your favorite book?" they asked.

"My favorite book is Mark."

"What's your favorite part?"

"My favorite part is the parables."

"Oh, yeah. What's your favorite parable?"

"My favorite parable is the one about 'The Good Samaritan.'"

"Can you tell it to the eldership?"

The preacher replied, "Yep. It goes this way: "Once there was this man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among the thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked him. And as he went on, he didn't have any money, and he met the Queen of Sheba. She

gave him a thousand talents of gold and a thousand changes of raiment, and he got into a chariot and drove furiously. He was driving so furiously, he drove under a Juniper Tree, and his hair got caught on the limb of the tree. He hung there for many days, and the ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. And he ate 5,000 loaves of bread and 2 fishes. Then one night, while he was hanging there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair, and he dropped and fell on stony ground – some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some one-hundred fold.

When he looked up, he saw a cloud no bigger than a mustard seed. And it commenced to raining forty days and forty nights. But the Lord prepared a great fish that swallowed him up for the duration of 1,260 days. Now when it was complete that fish spit him out and he hid himself in a cave eating locusts and wild honey. When the Lord had also fed him on manna and quail, he came up out of the cave and when he looked down he saw a giant – it was Goliath, but he passed by on the other side.

Then he went on until he met a servant who said, 'Come; let's have supper together.' But he made an excuse and said, 'No, I won't. I married a wife and cannot go.' So the servant went out to the highways and the hedges and compelled him to get supper. After he had eaten sumptiously, he said, 'Did not my heart burn within me?'

After supper, he went on and came down to Jericho. When he got there, he looked up and saw that old Queen Jezebel, sitting high up on the window and she laughed at him. He looked around and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Others gathered and said, "We are!" So he said unto them, 'Throw her down, out there!' And they threw her down. They then took her up to the top of the pinnacle of the temple. Then he said, 'Throw her down again!' And they threw her down 70 times 7. And of the fragments that remained, they picked up 12 baskets full …, besides women and children. – They said, 'Blessed are the PIECE-makers.'

"Now there is one question I would like to ask the eldership?"

One elder said, "What's that?"

"Now, whose wife do you think she will be in the resurrection?"

Are You an Asset or a Liability?

Paul Clements

This is a question regarding your relationship to Christ and His church. It deserves an answer. An asset is an advantage, a useful and valuable resource. In finances, it is on the plus side of the ledger. A liability is a drawback, that which is not beneficial. It would be someone who is a disadvantage to the cause, an encumbrance, hindrance or impediment.

Ask yourself, "If everyone in the church was just like me, what kind of church would this church be?" Would we have to call off some of the services or classes due to lack of attendance, or would we soon be having to put chairs in the aisle because you are inviting and teaching the lost? If you were not here next Lord's Day, would the contribution drop dramatically because you are a liberal giver, or would there be little change in the total?

Consider these questions: Do you teach (privately or in the classroom)? How are you using your talents? Is the worship God-centered and reverential because of your demeanor and conduct? In your relationships with the brethren, do you love from the heart, or do you just tolerate them? Do you spread gossip or only good news? Do you help or hinder a fellow Christian in his service to God? Are you a steppingstone or a stumbling block? How encouraging are you?

In your daily walk, what impression do you leave with others? Do they view the church in a good way because of the example you set? Do people who work with you respect you and have a high regard for the church because of the way you conduct yourself?

How many baptisms would we have this year? Would we still be considered a friendly congregation if everyone were like you? How many sick would be visited this week? Would any hungry be fed? What nice thing would be done for someone else if everybody were just like you?

If you were not here, would the church be better off, or would we be the worse for it? Ask yourself, "In one year from now, where would the church be if the whole church was just like me"?

Paul Clements is a former elder, a Gospel preacher, a writer and a hymn composer. He lives in Pike Road, Alabama, USA.

With What Measure Ye Mete

Bob Howton



Marvin Killian was a six-year-old English lad whose parents lived in an impoverished section of London, England. During a bleak, chilly winter, both of his parents died of pneumonia, and the young boy was left alone. His only relative was an aunt who lived in the far away city of Liverpool. Kind people of the neighborhood purchased a railway ticket and packed all of his earthly belongings in one small bag, before placing him on the train.

Arriving in Liverpool just before dark, the lad was hungry, tired and very apprehensive. He expected his aunt to meet him, but a servant named Caesar came riding upon a great black horse. Caesar helped him up on the horse, and they started off. Anxiously, the lad asked Caesar if his aunt would already be gone to bed when they arrived at her house. "Oh! No, Sir!" Caesar answered. "In a little way you'll see her candles in the distance, burning for you." Surely enough, there it was!

When they reached the house, Marvin saw his lovely aunt standing

beside the gate, waiting for him. When Caesar helped him to the ground, she ran to him, embraced him and smothered him with her kisses. Taking him inside, she washed his face and hands, and sat him down to a warm supper of beef stew and bread pudding. She drew him a warm bath and helped him get into his pajamas. She knelt with him as he said his prayers, and sitting beside his bed, she held his hand until he fell asleep. She loved and cared for him through his adolescent years and guided his spiritual growth with daily Bible readings and regular attendance at church services. Later, she sent him to a prestigious college, where he graduated with honors. Later, Marvin moved to a distant city to begin a prosperous job. He and his aunt were in constant contact throughout all the ensuing years, and their love for each other grew with every passing day.

One fateful evening, a red cap brought him a telegram, which simply said, "Your aunt is gravely ill! Come quickly!" His return telegram read, "Will be there ASAP. Meantime, do not be afraid. I know God loves you, and He will be just as kind and loving to you as you were to me so long ago, and throughout the years that followed. Much love and best wishes. Marvin." The following passages from the Bible seem appropriate and applicable. ***"…and with what measure ye mete, it shall he measured to you again"*** (Matthew 7:2). ***"…whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, …he shall in no wise lose his reward"*** (Matthew 10:42). What greater epitaph could be etched in our tombstone than what was said of righteous Abel? ***"…he being dead yet speaketh"*** (Hebrews 11:4).

Dr. E.M. Poteat, one time President of Furman University (in Greenville, South Carolina), spoke this to a class one day. "Carve your name high o'er shifting sand, Where the steadfast rocks defy decay: All you can hold in your cold, dead hand, Is what you have given away." Do you have aught that you can hold onto, like Marvin Killian, above? What about "hope" after life?

Robert "Bob" E. Howton (1928-2021) was a husband to his wife Annie Lee (Wheeler) Howton for 73 years. He was a father and a grandfather. Brother Bob functioned as an elder, a Bible class teacher and an outstanding religious writer. He lived and served our Lord in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

Do You Need Rest?

Wayne Barrier

The world today seems more complicated and complex than ever. We have read that almost half of the population of the United States is dependent upon anti-depression medication to cope with the challenges of everyday life. At the same time, surveys indicate that commitment to Christ, His church and biblical teaching is at an all-time low point. It seems that a sensible, rational, logical response to this situation would be to look back at better times in our society when more people were committed to faithfully following the teaching of Jesus. Let's consider some of His words.



First, consider Matthew 11:28-30 when Jesus said, ***"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***

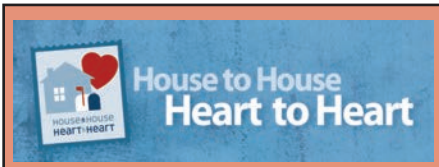
light" (NKJV). This invitation calls us to a place of peace, rest and a lighter burden. Why reject this offer? Next consider where this journey with Jesus begins. Consider Matthew 22:36-39 as Jesus answered a question about following Him. He stated, ***"'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*** This is the beginning point for following Jesus.

Next, we can understand the need for our commitment to Jesus to be genuine and complete. Mark 8:34-38 records:

> ***When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."***

Finally, Jesus will bless us with strength (Philippians 4:13), understanding (Ephesians 2:18), mercy and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), providential help (Romans 8:28), and eternal life in Heaven (John 3:15, Colossians 1:15). Why reject Jesus and these blessings?

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



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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.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Joshua 10:1 19th word _____

Judges 19:10 28th word _____

2 Samuel 5:6 12th word _____

2 Samuel 11:1 39th word _____

2 Samuel 15:14 23rd word _____

1 Kings 8:1 5th word _____

Zechariah 8:3 4th word _____

Hebrews 11:10 13th word _____

Hebrews 11:16 16th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

Seek the Old Paths

Dean Kelly

Jeremiah 6:16 reads, ***"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'"*** It is amazing how human beings always want ***new and improved***. That is a common mantra in advertising. Sometimes new and improved is a good thing. Look how far cell phones have come from the old bag phone, to the huge handheld ones, to the slim, basically computer ones that we have now. The sad thing is, however, that humans tend to want to look for ***new and improved*** when it comes to the Word and Will of God.

Instead of seeking the old paths, they want to blaze a ***new path*** that they sometimes call "progressive." Actually, most of the time these "progressive" ideas, these "re-examinations" and new thoughts about what they like to call "Church-of-Christ doctrine," are simply rehashes of old errors already taught by people through the centuries. Almost every time some brother makes a declaration of what he has "discovered," you can go back and find where that "discovery" has been hashed and re-hashed in times gone by. They simply regurgitate the same false ideas that were already taught by false teachers way before their time. They remind me of the Gnostics of the first century in that they claim how much more knowledge they have than all the faithful Gospel preachers who preceded them. (Gnostic comes from the Greek term meaning "to know"; the Gnostics claimed special knowledge no one else had.) These folks want to sound smart and to say to all, "I know better than you do!"

Most of the time these so-called great thinkers spend a great deal of time ridiculing or just plain bashing the church in which they grew up and the preachers they have heard, calling them unloving, ignorant of grace, etc. Apparently, **one must tear down the old paths to lead people into new ones**.

Let's teach the whole counsel of God in love but with conviction and without compromise. I don't have any special knowledge; I just want to walk in God's paths – in the old paths – which adhere to His Word and seek His authority for what we do religiously.

Dean Kelly is the minister for the Highland Home Church of Christ in Highland Home, Alabama, USA.

The Future Home of the Saved: Heaven or Earth?

Ted Cline

Some modern religionists teach that this earth is to undergo a process of cleansing and renovation following the Final Judgment, and it will then serve as the eternal home of the redeemed. Their hope is, therefore, an earthly, rather than a heavenly, hope. The Bible sets forth but ***"one hope"*** (Ephesians 4:4; Titus 2:13-14), not two, and the one hope of Scripture is Heavenly.

Jesus plainly declared, ***"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away"*** (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). The ***"heaven"*** of this passage is the ethereal atmosphere that surrounds the earth, the same ***"heaven"*** of the birds and fowls of the air (Luke 13:19; Psalm 104:12; Jeremiah 4:25; Lamentations 4:19; etc.). Jesus continued, ***"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"*** (Matthew 24:36, 42).

The apostle Peter gave a graphic description of the earth's end and complete destruction by fire (2 Peter 3:7-10). He said that ***"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."*** The Greek word for ***"burned up"*** is *katakaid*, meaning "to burn utterly, as the burning of chaff" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).*

Will the earth ever rise again? Isaiah the prophet said, "No." ***"The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again"*** (Isaiah 24:20).

True, there are some passages that speak of ***"the righteous inheriting the earth,"*** but these must be understood in the context of God's land promises to the Israelite nation, a promise that typified Heaven, the eternal Promised Land. See Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29; 105:9-11; Joshua 21:43; 23:16.

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, spoke to the Jews in that context when He said, ***"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*** This could just as well be rendered ***"…for they shall inherit the land."*** In those same Beatitudes, Jesus spoke of ***"seeing God," "inheriting the kingdom of heaven"*** and ***"great is your reward in heaven"*** (Matthew 5:1-12). In John 18:36 He said, ***"My kingdom is not of this world."***

Other passages use the word ***"earth"*** in the sense of ***"the world to come"*** (Hebrews 2:5; Ephesians 1:21) and ***"the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"*** (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21), a figure of speech referring to Heaven itself, which will take the place of the present ***"heaven and earth"*** that Jesus said would pass away.

Solomon made a statement in Ecclesiastes 1:4 that would seem to contradict the plain teaching of Scripture already considered. ***"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever."*** There is no contradiction, however, when we remember that the Hebrew word for ***"forever"*** often had a temporary significance, meaning "throughout the appointed time or until the end of the age." Circumcision was called ***"an everlasting covenant"*** (Genesis 17:13), the Passover was an ordinance ***"forever"*** (Exodus 12:14) and the Levitical system had an ***"everlasting priesthood"*** (Numbers 25:13). Yet, we know that all these ceased when the Law was fulfilled and removed with Christ's death. Even so, the earth abides perpetually, throughout all generations of its appointed time.

The New Testament abounds with promises of the hope of Heaven. The Hebrew writer said that great men of faith in ages past looked forward to the Heavenly Home. ***"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth, seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly"*** and ***"God hath prepared for them a city"*** (Hebrews 11:13-16). Peter described our inheritance as ***"incorruptible*** [imperishable], ***undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"*** (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Paul, throughout his epistles, pointed toward our Heavenly Home and inheritance. ***"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven"*** (Colossians 1:5). ***"You have in heaven a better and enduring substance"*** (Hebrews 10:34-36). ***"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle***

were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). ***"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom"*** (2 Timothy 4:18). Earlier, Paul said, ***"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"*** (2 Timothy 4:8). He admonished the Christians at Colossae, ***"Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, not on things on the earth"*** (Colossians 3:1-2).

John, in the Book of Revelation, related the glorious visions he was given of all the redeemed at home with God in the celestial, eternal city. Chapter 7 reveals two visions: (1) The 144,000, a symbolical number representing the sum total of the elect of Israel, the firstfruits of the Gospel and (2) a great, innumerable company of redeemed ones ***"out of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues."*** These, too, were standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes. Putting both together, we see all of God's children from all dispensations gathered with their Heavenly Father in the Eternal Home.

Revelation 21 describes the blessings enjoyed in that celestial city, and Revelation 22:14 tells us how we can be among those who enter. ***"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city."*** This coincides perfectly with Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21. Christ is the ***"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"*** (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The ***"one hope,"*** therefore, is the hope of all the redeemed together with God the Father and Christ the Lamb, rejoicing and praising Him throughout eternity. This is ***"the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."***

Source

Ted Cline. "The Future Home of the Saved: Heaven or Earth?" *Firm Foundation* **5 Feb 1974, 6.**

The Egyptian Connection

George McNulty

For over three thousand years, one of the most influential civilizations flourished on the banks of the river Nile. Egypt's art and skill were unsurpassed. The mighty pyramids, over forty stories tall, remained the largest manmade structures until the Eiffel Tower was constructed in 1889. Even today, we are surrounded by their influence. The very building in which you are probably has a pyramid shaped roof. Among Egypt's inventions are fluffy towels, makeup, toothpaste, cough drops and deodorant! We have much for which to thank them! Egypt never colonized other territories like the Greeks and the Romans, for they believed that in order for them to enter the afterlife, they must be buried with the correct rituals and only within Egyptian borders.

We Christians have a similar requirement; in order for us to enter our afterlife, we must be buried with Christ in baptism to enter the kingdom of Heaven (Galatians 3:27). So, if you are not in Him by His pattern of entrance, then you are not in His kingdom.

Egypt was the first nation state in history, and its ruler, the pharaoh, was a supreme monarch. He was unlike the kings of surrounding tribal peoples in that he was to his people the god king; he commanded, and it was done. There were no political squabbles in a land ruled by a pharaoh, and there were no government shutdowns or arguments about what was to be done. The king said it, and it was done. This pattern was followed by succeeding empires in one form or another and has been the pattern for government for the majority of humanity and for most of the historical record.

So, it is in the kingdom of God; Christ commands and that's it – no discussion, except on how we shall achieve His will. For example, in Mark 16:15, the King commands us to preach the Gospel to every creature. We don't get a say as to with whom we share the Gospel! The apostles, at Pentecost, did not limit the good news to select groups or restrict their ministry to just locals. It was, and still is for all, for whosoever believeth in Him, not for whom we choose to deliver the Gospel message!

When the land has a single ruler, whose will is to be obeyed, things get done. Nations are built and people are defended. Families who need food and water receive. Christ came to build His kingdom, and we are tasked to give the bread and water of His Gospel for the nourishment of all. In John 6:35, He said, ***"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*** In Revelation 21:6, the Lord declared, ***"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."***



Unlike those under the rule of the Egyptian god-kings, we have a choice of whom we serve! Our King is truly God, and He requires that we do as He says – not out of an unwilling or complaining attitude but because we love Him (John 14:15).

Now, you may be asking, "What does Egypt have to do with the Bible and what is the relevance?" Open your Bible and very soon you will see that the ancient Egyptian empire – its power, people, ways, religion and

influence – echo throughout the Word of God.

It is a fact that the first five books of the Holy Bible were written by a member of the Egyptian royal family. Moses was a prince of Egypt for forty years. He was raised in its cultural ways and in the very center of its religious and secular life. He was highly educated and saw the suffering of his own people. The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim descended from Joseph and his Egyptian wife. So, there is plenty of Egyptian blood in the house of Israel. We are told in 1 Kings 3:1 that Solomon married pharaoh's daughter. It was to Egypt that Joseph of Nazareth took his wife Mary and adopted son Jesus. In Matthew 2:13, Scripture tells us, ***"Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."***

There are simply too many connections between Egypt and the Bible to ignore. Through study of God's Word, we discover the greatest treasure ever to come out of that ancient land – the Lord Jesus Christ. He is everything the pharaoh wished to be and was not! Our blessed Redeemer is everything for which the pharaohs' people longed in their king. On the birthday of the church on Pentecost in Jerusalem, Jews residing in Egypt were among the first to hear the Gospel, and some likely were among the 3,000 souls who accepted Christ as their Lord. Won't you follow their excellent example?

George McNulty preaches for the Lord's church in Ireland.



We have heard for a long time the phrase, "It is my body to do with what I want." Based on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, for the Christian, one's body and spirit belong to God. If we are Christians, we will make decisions based on belonging to God. What will you do? ***"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."***



Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Across

1 Othniel's older brother. Judges 3:9
2 Eglon, king of Moab, was what kind of man? Judges 3:17
4 Othniel's father. Judges 3:9
6 Son of Anath and 3rd judge of Israel. Judges 3:31
7 Ehud's father. Judges 3:15
8 The children of Israel did what in the sight of the Lord? Judges 3:12
9 How many years did the children of Israel serve Eglon? Judges 3:14
10 How long was the dagger that was made by Ehud? Judges 3:16
12 First judge of Israel. Judges 3:9-10
13 How many hundreds of Philistines did Shamgar kill at one time? Judges 3:31

Down

1 King of Mesopotamia. Judges 3:10
2 How many years rest did Israel have under Othniel? Judges 3:11
3 What did Ehud make and place on his right thigh under his clothes? Judges 3:16
5 King of Moab. Judges 3:12
9 He was the left-handed judge of Israel. Judges 3:15
11 In what body part did Ehud stab Eglon? Judges 3:21
12 With what kind of goad did Shamgar kill 600 Philistines? Judges 3:31



See inside back cover for the solution.

Peter

Ed Benesh

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

I love these verses for a number of different reasons, many of which stem more from the writer of the words than the words themselves. You and I know Peter fairly well. The New Testament is literally filled with his name, and quite frankly, that name is not always associated with the most appropriate behaviors. After all, it was Peter who denied Christ three times leading up to the crucifixion. It was Peter who had to be told, ***"Get behind me Satan"*** (Matthew 16:23). Even after he matured in the faith, Paul had to ***"resist him to his face"*** (Galatians 2:11-14) when Peter showed partiality to the Jews.

Because of these things, we can often be a little hard on Peter, just as we can be a little hard on ourselves. Yet, in these passages, Peter might as well be writing a commentary about his own life in God's words. He finally figured it out. Spiritual success is not an all-at-once event, but rather it is an ***"adding to"*** enterprise. Spiritual success is not found in a single flash point explosion of spiritual clarity, but spiritual maturity occurs little by little as we build each day upon our faith with the lessons learned, often through our failures.

It is so easy to get ahead of ourselves spiritually and desire an instantaneous-just-add-water kind of faith that ends up frustrating our best efforts, leaving us feeling lost and inadequate. You can't, however, cheat Christianity from running its natural course for your life. You can't go to the end of the book of your life without having first lived. Wisdom for

living is simply not attained by reading a few chapters in the Bible but through a lifetime of reading as well as trial and error in our attempts to use the things we read every day.

If you ask folks what Christianity is all about, more than likely the vast majority will jump right to the end of it all and say something like "Heaven" or "eternal life." While we do not want to minimize the grandness of that reward or to urge you in any way to take your eye off the prize, it seems unreasonable to skip right over the small, daily victories that occur often and define our path to the end, which would not exist without them. You see, when you decided not to browse for porn, overcame your distractions to finish that read through the Bible program, held your tongue when it wanted desperately to unleash its fury or quit that habit that has plagued you for years and wasted your income, then, you are victorious. You have added to your faith, and in adding to it, you grew closer to the assurance of never being barren, even into eternity.



Heaven is the ultimate goal, but it is the long-term objective that is only achieved with short-term victories. Celebrate your spiritual victories as you add to your faith and grow in your understanding.

Ed Benesh preaches for the Pinellas Park Church of Christ in Pinellas Park, Florida, USA.

[Editor's Note: All of one's life and every past day lived – with its successes as well as with its failures – is who a person has become on a journey not yet finished as long as a man or a woman draws breath. Who we become ultimately and where we will spend eternity is the sum of every day of our lives. Thank you, brother Benesh, for some important principles on which to reflect as we make our Christian walk toward Heaven. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Examining the Apostles

Hiram Kemp

The special group of men Jesus commissioned to carry the Gospel to the world after His ascension were known as the apostles. The word "apostle" means one sent out with a message. Every apostle was a disciple, but not every disciple was an apostle. The apostolic office was a special role fulfilled by those selected by Jesus Himself (Mark 3:13-14; Acts 1:24-25). He prayed all night before He selected the men to serve in this capacity (Luke 6:12-13). Some of these men were trained and given power during Jesus' earthly ministry as they saw Him teach, heal the sick, cast out demons and raise the dead (Matthew 10:1; 11:4-5). After His return to Heaven, the apostles were guided into all the Truth, and they laid the foundation of God's household (John 16:13; Ephesians 2:19-20)

There are some apostles about whom we do not know much. We are only told their names. There are other apostles about whom we know a great deal because Scripture allows us to look into their lives before and after Jesus called them (e.g., Peter, John, Paul). It is thought-provoking to consider the various types of men Jesus called to be His apostles. Let us notice a few things about some of the lesser-known apostles based on what we find in Scripture. As His disciples today, be encouraged that He can use us just like He used them.

Matthew: The Tax Collector Turned Evangelist

Before Jesus called Matthew (also known as Levi; cf., Mark 2:14) to be His disciple, he was a tax collector. Tax collectors were detested in first-century Palestine because they were seen as corrupt traitors who worked for the Romans. Tax collectors sometimes took more than was necessary and were guilty of greed and dishonesty (Luke 3:12-13; 19:2; 19:8). The Pharisees frowned on tax collectors and did not think that any righteous person should keep company with them (Luke 15:1-2).

However, when Jesus saw Matthew, He did not see someone who was

beyond hope. He saw a man full of potential who would be an apostle and a faithful evangelist. Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, and Matthew did just that (Matthew 9:9). He not only followed Jesus, but he eventually penned the first Gospel account in our New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew is a favorite of many, and probably the one with which people are most familiar because of its position in the New Testament. Matthew was a tax collector, despised by his countrymen but desired by his God. His contribution to the New Testament should encourage us to never count anyone out. We should be reaching out to those on whom the world has given up and let them know that God wants to give them another opportunity (2 Peter 3:9).

Andrew: The Brother and Bringer

Andrew was a disciple of John before he was a follower of Jesus. Without a doubt, this prepared him to follow the Messiah (John 1:35-40). Once Andrew identified Jesus as the Messiah, he called his brother Peter and introduced him to Jesus (John 1:41-42). Jesus called both Andrew and Peter away from their fishing nets and charged them to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:18-20). Later, Andrew brought a young boy to Jesus who provided the bread and fish for Jesus to feed the 5,000 (John 6:8-10). On one occasion, Andrew introduced some Greeks to Jesus who desired to see Him (John 12:20-22).

We do not possess any writings from Andrew or any sermons that he preached, but we know that he was always bringing people to Jesus. If all someone could say about us is that we are bringing people to Jesus, that would be a great compliment (Mark 5:19). Andrew's brother Peter became far more well-known than him, but had he never introduced Peter to Jesus, that may not have been possible. We may never write or preach like Peter, but we all can bring people to Jesus like Andrew. He was an apostle who no doubt did his share of preaching, teaching and healing, but he was, more than anything, someone who brought others to Jesus (Mark 6:7-13).

Thomas: From Doubter to Believer

Thomas was a man filled with courage and questions. When Jesus went to raise Lazarus from the dead, the disciples thought it might lead to

His death. Thomas was willing to go and die with Him (John 11:11-16). He was not afraid to go into battle with Jesus, but he was someone who liked to be sure of what to which he was committing before he fully committed. Before Jesus went to the cross, Thomas wanted Jesus to plainly tell him the way that He was going and how the apostles could follow Him (John 14:5). Jesus told him, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me"*** (John 14:6 NKJV).

Perhaps Thomas is most famous for his doubt concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Thomas was a twin (Didymus means twin, John 20:24) and was probably accustomed to people getting him mixed up with his brother. When the disciples claimed to have seen the risen Jesus, he may have thought they mixed him up with someone else. He wanted definite proof (John 20:24-25). Jesus appeared, allowed Thomas to feel the wounds in His hands and in His side, and commanded Thomas to believe (John 20:26-27). Upon feeling the wounds and being assured of Jesus' identity, Thomas exclaimed, ***"My Lord and My God!"*** (John 20:28). When Thomas learned the truth, he expressed it. Jesus said of those of us who have not seen but have the eyewitness testimonies of the apostles that we can be blessed in our belief (John 20:29). The Gospel records were written so we could have the same faith and assurance that Thomas enjoyed and know for certain Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31). Thomas struggled with doubt but turned his doubt to conviction. As we find things in Scripture that challenge us and leave us doubting, we should not stop until we come to the Truth like Thomas. Then, we should share it and proclaim it as he did.

Judas: The Traitor

Judas was not always wicked. Jesus prayed for him and empowered him to do His work in the Limited Commission just as He did for the other apostles. However, at some point, Judas turned away from righteousness and is forever remembered for his treachery. Every time Judas is listed among the apostles, he is mentioned last. This epithet is attached to his name: The traitor (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; John 6:71). Judas chose to betray Jesus for money, and after he was overwhelmed

with guilt, he hanged himself (Matthew 26:14-16; 26:47-50; 27:3-5). He is a sad example of what could happen to any disciple of Jesus. He was an apostle who taught others, performed miracles and was close to Jesus, but he ended his life in apostasy. From Judas, we learn many things, but perhaps the most important lesson is that as we walk close to Jesus, we should be sure that we are true disciples and not traitors.

No one today can be an apostle of Jesus, but everyone can be His disciple. The apostles were selected in the first century for a special role, and no one living today occupies this office (Acts 1:21-22). Still, we should examine their lives and mimic the good they did and refrain from the bad. Jesus chose all types of men to follow Him, and He used them in unique ways. Jesus is still calling men and women to follow Him, but it is up to us to accept His invitation.

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Robison's Rubies



"I just can't hold it together anymore!" Frustrated people all over the earth feel like their lives are falling apart and utter this desperate cry. Do you ever wonder who holds the world together? The answer is Deity, Who created it. Hebrews 11:3 states, ***"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."*** Then, Hebrews 1:3, in arguing the Divinity of Christ, states that He is ***"upholding all things by the word of His power."*** There is a power in God's Word. If it can hold the world together, certainly it can hold together my life and yours. Hebrews 4:12 proclaims, ***"The word of God is living and powerful…"*** **Have you ever heard the statement that a Bible which is falling apart is usually owned by someone who isn't?**

Are The Red Letters of the New Testament All That Matter?

David Fanning and Shane Fisher

There are some people who take the position that the words of Jesus in the New Testament (which are printed in red in most Bibles, such as the NKJV) are more important than the rest of the words in the New Testament. Some people would go so far as stating that the commands of the New Testament inspired writers are not relevant today because they are not in red letters.

Why did "**red letter editions**" of the Bible appear in the first place? Since Jesus is the God-man, probably the translators of the Bible had the utmost desire to distinguish His words from the words of ordinary men. We need to remember these red letter editions of the Bible were not found among the early New Testament manuscripts.

Why is it important to uphold the black letters just as much as the red letters? Because the authority of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18) was given and delegated to these men called apostles who were guided directly by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18, 25-26; John 16:7-15; Galatians 1:11-12). We are to adhere to their doctrine (Acts 2:42) because it originated from God.

The underlying reason for most likely holding to this "**red letters**" position is to strip away the strict teachings on the roles of men and women in the spiritual life of the church and the home (1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35; Ephesians 6:1-4), the sinfulness of homosexuality (Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and laws about marriage, divorce and remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-40).

Paul stated it best in 1 Corinthians 14:37: "***If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.***" Technically speaking, all the words of the apostles and prophets are the words of Jesus because they are backed up by His authority and preserved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16).

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Does This Passage Refer to the Splendor of Heaven?

Raymond Elliott

"But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him'" (1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV). We cannot find this complete sentence in the Old Testament but the expression, ***"But as it is written"*** means that the thought is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. We read in Isaiah 64:4, ***"For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him."***

The apostle Paul took this passage for the basis of his inspired message in 1 Corinthians 2:9. To understand this verse, we must read carefully the context in which it is found. When tPaul came to Corinth, he found that members of the church were following the wisdom of the Greek philosophers. He wanted the Corinthians to know that he was ***"determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*** (1 Corinthians 2:2). His preaching was with the ***"demonstration of the Spirit and power"*** and not the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 2:4). Notice carefully verses 7-8. ***"But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*** So, the ***"secret and hidden wisdom of God"*** that He decreed (predetermined) before the ages referred to the time when Jesus Christ had been crucified by the rulers in ignorance, not believing that He was God in the flesh! Paul described the ***"secret and hidden wisdom of God"*** in verse 9, ***"But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."***

That which eye had not seen, ear had not known and had not ***"entered the heart of man"*** was made known by the Holy Spirit to certain inspired men because verse 10 states, ***"But God revealed them to us*** [apostles and prophets] ***through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God."*** "A manifest proof that the apostle speaks here of the glories of the Gospel, and not of the glories of the future world" (Clarke). It was the Spirit who communicated to men a description of the Gospel age found in verse 9, which included the incarnation of the promised Messiah, the redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, the establishment of the church of our Lord and the peace, joy, hope and the inclusion of all people in His body. That which has been revealed is no longer a mystery or a secret in the plans of God. Please observe that we are speaking of verse 9 in the light of the context in 1 Corinthians 2:7-10. However, it is to be understood that what is written in verse 9 could be said of what God has prepared for the saved in Heaven.

One passage among others that helps us to understand that Paul was referring to the new age of Jesus Christ and His kingdom is Ephesians 3:8-12.

> ***To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.***

Gill, in his comments summarizes verse 9 in this manner.

> The things which God hath prepared for them that love him; in the original text it is, "for him that waiteth for him"; the sense is the same, for such as hope in the Lord and wait for him, are lovers of him; and the meaning is, that God has prepared and laid up in his own breast, in his counsels and covenant, in the types, shadows, and sacrifices of the old law, in the promises and proph-

ecies of the Old Testament, such doctrines and mysteries of grace as were not so seen, heard, known, and understood by the Old Testament prophets and saints; and has reserved for his people under the Gospel dispensation, the times of the Messiah. (Gill)

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[Editor's Note: The foregoing provides an invaluable lesson, especially to all preachers and teachers in light of James 3:1, that proper biblical interpretation requires the careful examination of the context in which any verse of Scripture appears. Anything else is not "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 ESV) or "rightly dividing the word of truth" (NKJV), for which especially preachers and teachers "need to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Noting Your Bible



Marriage

Marriage should be a word that brings beautiful thoughts to our minds. Unfortunately, the choices people have made and the world in which we live has made that difficult for many. Let us go to Scripture to see how God wants us to view and uphold marriage, and then pray for the strength to live it out in our lives.

1. Note this topic in your Bible and write, "**Genesis 1:27-28**."
2. Turn to Genesis 1 and note somewhere in the margins, "**Genesis 2:18-25**." Here, you can make reference that chapter 2 of Genesis gives us more detail of what was recorded in chapter 1 of Genesis.
3. In Genesis 2:18-25, note, "**God defines marriage in the beginning for all time and cultures (see Hebrews 13:4)**." You may want to reference 1 Corinthians 11:3, 9 and 1 Timothy 2:13 noting that Paul discussed the roles of men and women which are based in creation. (If men and women lived out their God-given roles according to the Word, their marriages and homes would be more joyous.)
4. Turn to Hebrews 13:4 and write, "**marriage is honorable and to be kept as such among all people (see Colossians 3:5-11)**." You may want to circle the word 'all' and underline this verse.
5. In Colossians 3:5-11, note, "**Fornication (sex outside of marriage) is sinful (see 1 Corinthians 6:18)**." Also in Colossians 3, note what the Holy Spirit says to put on in the following verses (12-25), with specific commands to wives and husbands (18-19).
6. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6:18, noting the command to "**flee fornication**." Reference verses 9-11 where it is made clear that sexual sins can be forgiven if we truly repent. Underline or highlight verse 11. Write, "**(see 1 Corinthians 7)**."
7. Read the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 7, and write next to the first few verses, "**Sex belongs in marriage and should not be abused: outside marriage (verses 1-2), nor inside marriage (verse 3-5)**." Study the whole chap-

ter of 1 Corinthians 7 in context. Paul states in verses 10 and 11 that the Lord commands us not to divorce, and how one interprets the following verses cannot contradict what the inspired apostle already stated. Next to these verses, write, "**(see Matthew 19:3-12)**."

8. Note in Matthew 19, "**Jesus reminded them of God's original purpose and definition of marriage (one man + one woman + for life)**." Underline or highlight verse 5 referencing Genesis 2:24, and next to verse 9, write, "**God hates divorce! (Malachi 2:16; see Ephesians 5:22-33)**." Compare the parallel passage in Mark 10:1-12. You may also want to note that in verse 10, the disciples understood the seriousness of marriage, divorce and remarriage! Why don't we today?
9. Turn to Ephesians 5, noting the beauty of living-out our marriage in obedience to our Heavenly Husband as His bride, the church. Here, write, "**Wife respecting her husband, husband loving his wife makes a beautiful marriage – reflecting Christ and the church!**"

Marriage can be wonderful if we do it God's Way!

My husband and I wrote the following song from Ephesians 5. To hear it sung by Paul Mays visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pytvwN-MfUw

Marriage - The Mystery of God

1. Marriage (marriage) - the mystery of God
It was made - it's from the Father - up above
Marriage (marriage) - its meaning was hidden
Until Jesus through the Spirit showed the truth

2. Marriage (marriage) - it started in Eden
For one man - and for one woman - until death
Marriage (marriage) - let us have this vision
Heirs of grace and of the life and of the faith

3. Marriage (marriage) - when two become one
Now one flesh - in unity - and holiness
Marriage (marriage) - it's reverence and love
Sacrifice; and give completely of yourself

4. Marriage (marriage) - to be sanctified
With the washing of the water by the word
Marriage (marriage) - arise to be baptized
To begin - this holy union with your Lord

Chorus:

Christ died for the church and He gave Himself
So husbands, love your wives
And wives, must surrender to husbands
Love and respect intertwined
The mystery of marriage is revealed
His church is His one holy bride



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Questions I Have About The Book of Mormon: (Part 2)

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 article (in the previous *TVOTI* volume 111) contains fourteen questions. This is the second part.

(15) One of the most perplexing peculiarities of the *BOM* is that it contains biblical quotations that would not have yet been written down. 1 Nephi was supposedly written around 600-570 B.C. Why does it contain quotations from the Bible (specifically the New Testament, written between 40-100 A.D.) that had not been recorded yet? One such example is found in 1 Nephi 10:7-10, which reads, "And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord — Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: **Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight**; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is **mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose**. And much spake my father concerning this thing. And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water. And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had baptized **the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world**" (emphasis added). Compare this to such passages as Matthew 3:3, Luke 3:16 and John 1:23, 26-29. I have counted seventy-three plagiarized references to the New Testament in the book of 1 Nephi alone. For the

complete list, please email me at: worldevangelism1962@gmail.com.

(16) Why does the *BOM* adhere to the Calvinistic false doctrine of total hereditary depravity? Second Nephi 2:21 states, "For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents. And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin." The Bible teaches that sin entered the world through Adam, but all men are lost because all men have sinned against God. Romans 5:12 states, "***Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned***."

(17) Why does the *BOM* promote that Adam and Eve could not have had children unless they sinned (2 Nephi 2:23)? Read again the passage in question 16. This is absurd because one of the commands of God to Adam and Eve was to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:26-27.

(18) Why does it say that Adam and Eve were "doing no good, for they knew no sin"? If a person does not sin, is that not good? Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Did He not do good?

(19) Is the spokesman referring to Sidney Rigdon (2 Nephi 3:17,18)? It states, "And the Lord said unto me also: I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for him a spokesman…" *Doctrine & Covenants* 100:9 states, "And it is expedient in me that you, my servant Sidney, should be a spokesman unto this people; yea, verily, I will ordain you unto this calling, even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph." Even the footnote refers back to 2 Nephi 3:17-18. This is internal evidence suggesting strongly that Sidney Rigdon was involved in the transformation of turning Solomon Spalding's *Manuscript Found* into the *BOM*.

(20) Second Nephi 5:16,17 states, "And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not

built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands." How could Nephi and his company construct a building like the temple of Solomon? It had been 30 years since the family came from Jerusalem (2 Nephi 6:28). Remember there is Lehi and his wife Sariah, the sons of Lehi – Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi – and we are told that Lehi had daughters, but are not given the number (2 Nephi 5:6). The former slave Zoram joined them. Lehi had two more sons – Jacob and Joseph. Ishmael's family joined them, which consists of Ishmael and his wife, two sons and five daughters, who would all intermarry with the descendants of Lehi and bear children. Given the accelerated birth rate if each family had a child each year, it would not begin to compare with the number of workers needed to build a temple likened to that of Solomon's which took seven and a half years to build. First Kings 5:13-16 states, "***Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force. Solomon had seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried stone in the mountains, besides three thousand three hundred from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work.***"

(21) Also, how did these Jews have authority to build a place for God's name and His dwelling place if the rightful place was already in Jerusalem? Deuteronomy 12:5-7 states, "***But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you.***" Also see

1 Kings 8:12-21, 29; 9:3; 11:36; 2 Chronicles 6:5-6; 12:13; John 4:19-24.

(22) Second Nephi 5:26 states, "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people." How could Jacob and Joseph (from the tribe of Manesseh, Alma 10:3) be ordained priests if they were not from the authorized priesthood of Israel – Levi? See 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 for the incident where Uzziah trespassed against God because he, not being a son of Aaron, was not authorized to burn incense.

(23) Why does 2 Nephi 9:9 (c.f., Ether 8:25; Mosiah 16:3) contradict 1 Timothy 2:11-14 in affirming that both Adam and Eve were beguiled when **only** Eve was beguiled? Second Nephi 9:9 states, "And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who **beguiled our first parents**, (emphasis added) who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness." First Timothy 2:11-14 (ASV of 1901) states, "***Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression.***"

(24) Why does the *BOM* bring over the KJV copyists' errors if God was directly inspiring the process in which each word was corrected before Joseph Smith commenced with the final translation? James Tolle states:

> There is no more emphatic proof of the modern origin of the Book of Mormon than its extensive use of quotations from the Bible. It is a plain fact that many hundreds of passages in the Book of Mormon are taken directly from the Bible; e.g., large portions of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 12 through 24), the Sermon on the Mount (according to Matthew), several verses from the writings of Paul, etc. The remarkable thing about these Bible quotations in the Book of Mormon is that they have all been taken from the King James Version, translated by bishops of the Church of England centuries after the

last part of the original Book of Mormon was supposed to have been written. Think of it! Here is a book of which the greater part was supposedly written originally in the pure Egyptian language (1 Nephi 1:2) on plates brought by Nephi from the city of Jerusalem six hundred years before Christ, later to undergo one transcription, and that by the prophet Mormon in reformed Egyptian (Mormon 9:32), and then in the nineteenth century purportedly to be infallibly translated into English through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith by "the gift and power of God," with all its Bible quotations agreeing either exactly or essentially with an English translation of the sacred scriptures made in the seventeenth century from Hebrew and Greek texts, which in the case of the Hebrew text had been handed down from generation after generation, copied and recopied hundreds of times! If we accept the claim that the direct Bible quotations in the Book of Mormon which are either exactly or essentially the same as in the King James Version were infallibly translated by "the gift and power of God," then we are driven to the conclusion that the bishops of the Church of England infallibly translated these quotations into English from the Hebrew and Greek texts. But the scholarship of the world concurs that these bishops did make mistakes in their translation, not serious ones which change any basic Bible doctrine or practice, but mistakes nevertheless. And it is undeniably a fact that some of these mistakes were brought over into the Book of Mormon proving beyond all reasonable doubt that the author of this book simply copied quotations from the King James Version, and that the "gift and power of God" had nothing to do with it. (Tolle 15-17)

(25) Why does the *BOM* seem to be environmentally influenced by the Freemasonry controversy that fits into the nineteenth century American historical context (2 Nephi 10:11-15; 26:14-22; Helaman 6:22-23; 3 Nephi 3:9; 6:28-30; 7:6-10; Mormon 8:27-41; Ether 8:15-25; 10:33)?

(26) Second Nephi 10:3 states, "Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient **that Christ – for in the last night the angel spake**

unto me that this should be his name (emphasis added) – should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him – for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God." Why does Nephi state that the name of the Savior would be Christ when it is the **Greek equivalent to the Hebrew title – Messiah**?

(27) One of the marks of inspiration for the Bible is its *brevity*. Dave Miller explains:

> There are any number of proofs which document that the Bible is inspired of God. But the Book's uncanny brevity is one obvious proof of its divine origin. Throughout history, humans have been quite verbose in articulating their ideas and thoughts – from multi-volume encyclopedias, history books, and biographies, to the pronouncements of religious authorities via their councils, disciplines, and sundry theologies. In stark contrast to this human inclination, the books of the Bible are incredibly brief. Consider, for example, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were given the weighty responsibility of reporting to the world for all ages the momentous events surrounding the life of Christ while He was on Earth. John even admitted that there were so many activities that occurred during Jesus' life that, ***"if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written"*** (John 21:25). So what should be included, and what should be excluded in such a critical literary endeavor? In reporting the events in the life of an extremely eminent figure in world history, what human writer would omit the birth – as Mark and John did? What author would skip over the first thirty years of the person's life – as all four of the Gospel writers did (with Luke's one exception of an incident in Jesus' life at the age of twelve)? The baptism of Jesus is told in twelve lines by Matthew, and in six lines by Mark and Luke. Of the twelve post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, two are noted by Matthew, three each by Mark and Luke, and four by John. In Acts, Luke provided the only inspired

> report of the first thirty years of the history of the church and the spread of Christianity – and he did it in just twenty-eight chapters! The untimely death of the first apostle, James, which must have been a tremendous blow to the early church (on the order of, say, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to Americans), is recorded in a short eleven words. With such cataclysmic, earthshaking subject matter, how did these authors produce such succinct, condensed, concise histories consisting of only a few pages? The answer? They wrote under the overruling influence (in this case, restraint) of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). (Miller 1)

Does not 2 Nephi 31:1-2 violate this principle of brevity? It states: "And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob. Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying." Many other examples could be cited.

(28) Second Nephi 25:10 states, "Wherefore, it hath been told them concerning the destruction which should come upon them, immediately after my father left Jerusalem; nevertheless, they hardened their hearts; and according to my prophecy they have been destroyed, save it be those which are carried away captive into Babylon." Consider that 1 Nephi supposedly took place during the first year of the reign of Zedekiah (1 Nephi 1:2) and the destruction of Jerusalem did not happen until the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. Second Kings 25:1-2 states, "***Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah***." Is not nine to eleven years a far stretch for the word "immediately"?

(29) Second Nephi 25:19 states, "For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my

father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Is there not a contradiction between 2 Nephi 25:19 and Matthew 1:22, 25 because the name was not given until the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary?

(30) Second Nephi 25:24-25 states, "And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore **the law hath become dead unto us**, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; **yet we keep the law** (emphasis added) because of the commandments." One of the primary objectives of Jesus was to fulfill the Law of Moses and thereby render it obsolete (Matthew 5:17-18; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14-16; Hebrews 10:9-10). Paul wrote in Romans 7:1-4, "***Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God***." It is important to realize that until Jesus died on the cross, the law of Moses was still active. When Jesus fulfilled the law by His death, then the Jews were no longer bound to it. They were bound to the new covenant – the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:1-9). Paul stated a great theological truth that the two covenants could not be in force at the same time or else the Jews would be committing spiritual adultery.

Bales noted:

> If they [the Jews, SF] had been under His covenant, before the law was dead, and before they were dead to the law, they would have been in spiritual adultery. For as long as they were married to the law, they could not be married to Christ. After illustrating his point

> by the relationship in marriage, he concluded "wherefore" ["therefore," NKJV, SF] the relationship to the old law had been broken in order that they might be joined to Christ. Yes, they "became dead to the law by the body of Christ; "that" they might be joined to, or married to Christ" (7:4). So it is evident that as long as the law was alive, and they were alive to it - living under it - that they could not be delivered from the law (7:4, 6). And as long as they were not delivered from the law, they could not be joined to Christ." (Bales 150)

How then could Nephi have said that the Law of Moses had become dead to them since Jesus had not yet died? Also, how could they still keep the Law of Moses and the Gospel at the same time without committing spiritual adultery?

There are more questions to be asked about the Book of Mormon in future editions of *The Voice of Truth International*.

Works Cited

Bales, James. *The Book of Mormon?* Fort Worth: The Manney Company, 1958.

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Kenney's Pennies

"…Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10 NKJV). Faith, confession and baptism are all essential. Where is baptism mentioned? In Romans 6. Too many take passages out of context, and they end up overlooking other acts of faith. Are believing and confessing essential? Yes, but notice, it says ***"you will be saved."*** You must go onto salvation, which is found in the church, to which one is added by the Lord upon baptism (Acts 2:41, 47).

What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

* For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
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* Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is "No".
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Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search (page 70)

1. Much affliction and anguish.
2. The abundant love that he had for them.
3. Grief.
4. Forgive and comfort him.
5. If they forgave him, Paul was going to forgive him also.
6. Satan would take advantage of that situation.
7. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices.
8. A door was opened to him.
9. He did not find Titus.
10. The fragrance of Christ.
11. Peddling or selling the Word of God.

Bible Word Scramble (page 81)

Jerusalem

Bible Find (page 89)



Scavenger Hunt (page 40)

1. Hannah and Peninnah (1:1-2)
2. Shiloh (4:3)
3. Dagon (5:1-4)
4. Joel and Abijah (8:1-3)
5. Kish of Benjamin (9:1-2)
6. the Lord (10:20-24)
7. Jonathan (14:6)
8. Agag (15:1-9)
9. Merab (the older) (18:17)
10. killed himself by falling on a sword (31:4-5)

For Further Information, Please Contact:

Acts 2:41:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Hebrews 10:23-26:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the **truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice** for sins. (KJV)

During the current stormy season, the picture on the front shows what literally happened several times with the Church of Christ at Capisnon, Cagayan de Oro, Philippines. The brethren completed the worship service just fine, as if water was not there.

Notice too, it's a full house!