

GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 15

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CONCERN ABOUT EVIL IN THE LAND

Jim E. Waldron

Many are deeply concerned that the climate of vice in the land will lead to even greater horrors for this nation. Not only are we concerned about the lying and gross immorality in high political offices, even to the point of promoting the agenda of the homosexual lobby, but other things like: the garbage rented from video stores; the evil magazines published by Larry Flint and others; about doctor death in Michigan (who has presided over the self-murder of more than 100 sick and infirmed individuals); about the 4,000 little ones who are daily ripped from their mother's wombs; about afternoon talk shows (which glorify, in living color, virtually every form of lewdness); and, perhaps worst of all, opinion polls which show a majority of the people are willing to wink at such as long as their income is good.

When we experience moral outrage concerning such, it ought to help us to know as John the apostle wrote, "we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). Beloved, we must have confidence in our Savior, who has cleansed us from sin and made us fit for God's service. It is an evil cop-out to say we are all sinners, so we must be tolerant of ungodliness in others. There are two kinds of sinners—those who are saved, having been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and those who still walk in the ungodliness of this present evil world (See 1 Peter 4:1-5).

When we became children of God we repented and turned from evil (Acts 3:19). We are to be like David who prayed, "Purge me...and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow...then I will teach transgressors your ways" (Psalm 51:7-13). Again we are to know, "that the Lord has set apart for Himself him that is godly" (Psalm 4:3).

We must have "a walk worthy of the calling with which we were called" (Ephesians 4:1). We must not practice a prejudicial judgment like that of the hypocrites (Matthew 7:1), that is, not according to appearance, but we must "judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). That means we will judge people by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20). This is exactly what John, the son of Zacharias, did when he preached to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the masses of Israel, saying, "O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:7-8; Luke 3:7-8). Again, John rebuked Herod because he had married his brother's wife, even though he and she had gotten divorces from their respective mates (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18, 5:1, 4).

What we need in this generation is not back-slapping, ear-pleasing preachers who say to the politicians, the clergy and the masses, "you are okay and I am okay," but men of God like John

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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

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Editorial

TRUE RELIGION

Bill Dillon

So many religions! Why are there so many religions and churches? How can we know which is right? These are questions weighing heavily on men's minds.

As long as man assumes that God will accept any worship, regardless of whether that particular kind of worship is what God himself desires, there will continue to be a multiplicity of religions the Lord never intended. The modern religious world, with its denominationalism and "have-it-your-way" mumbo-jumbo approach to Deity, is not what God ever purposed. Such a state of religious babble is not sensational—it is sinful.

The adapted versions of Christianity available today are humanistic in orientation and origination. They are religions of convenience, not conviction. And though multiplied millions sincerely believe a falsehood—it is a falsehood still.

Can all ways of worship lead to God? How can they when they all contradict each other? The Eternal God has not left us in doubt.

The question is "How can we know which is true?" The answer is that *true religion* will be a *revealed religion*. True religion will not find its foundation in human desire, whim or caprice, but in the fact that it comes directly from God. A revealed religion does not come from a charismatic or dynamic religious leader, but directly from God.

The genuine (revealed) religion is the one where God speaks to mankind. This is exactly what the Bible claims to be. The Bible is the oldest and only credible religious message in the world.

The message of genuine religion will not be to flatter us and tickle our religious fancies. True religion will not cater to human folly nor elevate human will to be supreme to the will of God. True religion will not be man-centered but God-oriented.

In a world of religious darkness the Bible shines as the clear light from above banishing the blackness of religious confusion. The Bible is true. The Bible is right. May it ever shine unto eternal day.—612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653



*Our plea can be reduced to one basic sentiment or concept.
We must return to God's original order of things as outlined
in the New Testament.*

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN? #5

Ivie Powell



Educators agree that one of the best methods of teaching is through thought-provoking questions. Throughout this series of articles I have tried to stir parents to properly train their children. Up to this point, we have looked at marriage

and divorce, the church, worship, the Bible, sports and the cause of Christ, our language, as well as Biblical language. Some may be at a loss as to what their children know along these lines, or even where and how to start finding out. Why not start by asking them the following questions:

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. How did the world come into being?
2. How many books are in the Bible?
3. How did sin come into the world?
4. What does it mean to sin?
5. Why is there a rainbow?
6. How did the Bible come into being?
7. When was Jesus born?
8. Is the church of Christ a denomination?
9. What does the word "church" mean?
10. When was the church established?
11. Who is the head of the church?
12. What is the plan of salvation?
13. Why don't we use instrumental music in worship?
14. Is one saved by faith alone?
15. What acts of worship did the early church engage in?
16. Are there miracles today?
17. Can one marry and divorce for any reason?
18. What is repentance?
19. What is the Restoration Movement?

20. Why don't we call the preacher "reverend" or "pastor"?
21. Should Christians drink alcoholic beverages?
22. Can women be elders, deacons or preachers?
23. Are we born sinners?
24. Must one be a member of the Lord's church, the church of Christ, to be saved?
25. When should you be baptized?

The attention span of children varies, and I certainly am not suggesting that you sit your children down and rattle off those twenty-five questions. Rather, take one or two of the questions and, with open Bible, begin studying. An excellent time would be before bedtime. That way they go to bed with God's word fresh on their hearts.

In your study, I would highly recommend, that you use the KJV, NKJV or the ASV 1901 translation. Without doubt these are reliable translations and will not lead you astray. Another excellent tool that you will want to purchase for your children and grandchildren is *Nichol's Pocket Bible Encyclopedia* by C. R. Nichols. It is very inexpensive and a work they will cherish all of their lives. This study aid can be purchased from book stores operated by our brethren.—1915 Hoglen Street, West Plains, MO 65775

VISIT YOUR PARENTS

If you live in the same place, let your steps be—if possible daily—a familiar one in the old home; if you are miles away, make it your business to go to your parents. In this matter do not regard time or expense; the one is well spent, and the other will be, even a hundred-fold, repaid. When some day the word reaches you that your mother is gone, you will not think about those hours of travel which at last bore you to the loved one's side.—Anonymous

IS PLACING MEMBERSHIP WITH A LOCAL CHURCH NECESSARY?

Dennis Gulledge



What is meant by the expression “place membership” as it pertains to a local congregation? We must admit that we cannot find that expression in the Bible. It may be for this reason that some people think it is an unscriptural concept. Is it?

In Romans 16:1, Paul wrote “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” The subject of this verse is Phoebe. Paul identifies her as a Christian by referring to her as “our sister.” A Christian is one who has been immersed into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Her status was that of “a servant.” The word “servant” comes from the Greek word *diaconon*, and is by some rendered *deaconess*. That Phoebe served in whatever capacity women may serve God I have no doubt. That she served in any capacity of leadership over men I deny (1 Timothy 2:12). Her sphere of activity was “the church of Cenchrea.” She did not represent the “church at large,” or, “the church universal.” The church in Cenchrea was a congregation of God’s people in a specific locality, Cenchrea being a harbor town nine miles west of Corinth.

Sometimes brethren question whether placing membership in a local congregation is either necessary or Scriptural. People have said to me, “I am a member of the church wherever I go.” I would not deny that statement, but I will suggest that opponents to the idea of placing church membership need to carefully consider the New Testament teaching on this subject. Placing membership with a local church is essential for the following reasons:

Reasons of Church Organization

The church of Christ, in its universal sense, is the general spiritual body over which Jesus Christ is the head and every Christian is a member (Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 1:22). There is no such thing in the Bible as becoming a Christian and “joining” the church later. The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47).

There are times, in the New Testament, when the word *church* indicates a congregation of the disciples which comes together on the first day of the week to observe the Lord’s Supper and engage in other acts of public worship (Acts 20:7; Romans 16:5). Each congregation is independent. Paul addressed the church at Philippi saying, “Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (1:1). *Saints* are members who work together in that given locality. *Bishops* are elders, or overseers, of that local church (1 Timothy 3:1-7). *Deacons* are qualified servants in that congregation (1 Timothy 3:8-10). The New Testament knows nothing of any organization either larger or smaller than the local congregation in doing the Lord’s work.

Reasons of Involvement

If someone feels that he has no Scriptural reason to identify himself with a local congregation, it is well to ask how he can contribute to the work of that church? There is no obligation that he feels to be involved in the work. There is no accountability to a group of elders. There is no loyalty to a home congregation. There is no joint participation when everyone is disjointed! Remember that Phoebe was involved with the church in Cenchrea as one of its members.

Reasons of Oversight

Churches of Christ who have qualified men should have a plurality of elders overseeing the work of that congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). These bishops are to shepherd the local flock. They do not have jurisdiction over any other congregation (Acts 20:28).

Picture, if you will, the following scenario. Mr. Jones moves from one community (town or city) to another. He was laboring under the oversight of the elders of congregation A where he lived formerly. Since he no longer lives in that town, it is not possible that the elders of congregation A can continue to watch in behalf of his soul, as they are obligated to do (Hebrews 13:17). Mr. Jones needs to find another faithful congregation (congregation B) and let his desire to work and worship with them be known. This is what we mean by the expression "place membership." Actually, brother Jones is a member of the body of Christ wherever he may go. Yet, he cannot function under the oversight of two congregations at once, or of all congregations (such as "the church at large" idea would suggest). It is amazing how some brethren fail to understand this elementary principle of Scripture. In a church bulletin, not long ago, I read of a deacon and his family leaving one congregation and going to another in the same city. The announcement said, "There is no other reason other than we both feel this is what we need and what we want to do. _____ will always be our 'Church Home'...It's just worshipping at a different location of the Lord's body."

Brethren need to identify themselves with a local congregation and work specifically under the oversight of those elders. How can elders watch for the souls of persons without knowing those who are committed to their care? Also, how can elders exercise the divinely given function of oversight unless persons submit to that oversight? Those brethren who prate against the idea of placing membership in a local congregation actually oppose the Lord's design.

Reasons of Apostolic Example

Soon after his conversion Saul (Paul) worked with the church in Damascus: "And when he had received food he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:19-22). From there he seeks to identify himself with the church in Jerusalem: "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" (Vss. 26-28).

The *disciples* comprised the church in Jerusalem. To "join" them in their meetings, to work and be recognized as a member among them is like our "placing membership" with a local congregation today. To "join the disciples" is not the same as becoming a Christian. That occurred when Saul was immersed into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 9:17-18; 22:16). To "join the disciples" is not the same as "joining a denomination," since Protestant denominations did not exist in New Testament times (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27).

Is placing membership in a local church necessary? It is indeed! Is it Scriptural? Absolutely! The New Testament teaches that we are to be in a congregation, subject to the leadership of the elders involved in that work, and supportive of the Lord's cause in that place. —10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Ye Are The Salt Of The Earth"

Matthew 5:13



THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

Ronnie Whittemore



The heart of every person is a battleground. Satan seeks to defile it through the filthiness of the world (James 1:21), and Jesus seeks to cleanse it through the power of His Word (John 15:3). Jesus pleads for our hearts (John 14:1; Matthew 11:28-30). He exhorts His hearers to guard their hearts and beware that from the heart proceed evil deeds (Matthew 15:19). The wise man Solomon wrote that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). The fundamental lesson, therefore, pertains to the value of the heart regarding salvation. If the heart is right with God, then the life will be right with God. Therefore, every sinner begins his or her reconciliation to God and journey to salvation with the heart.

Every Christian in this century understands the importance of the pattern of the first century church. The church of this generation must possess the same identification marks as the church of the first century. One interesting and informative study of the Bible involves tracing the use of the words, "heart" and "hearts," throughout the book of Acts as they relate to the church. While so many brethren are distracted over what super-program a church may offer, emphasis should be placed upon the heart of the church. If the heart of the church is right, then the worship and mission of the church will be right also.

The word "heart" occurs nineteen times in eighteen verses, and the word "hearts" occurs five times in five verses in the book of Acts. Space will not permit an examination of each occurrence of the words "heart" and "hearts" in Acts, but let us concentrate on a selected few.

1. *It is important to select leaders with good hearts.* The subject of the heart is first mentioned in connection with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas as an apostle. The importance of the heart of the new apostle is emphasized when the comment is made that God knows the hearts of men in Acts 1:24. There is an obvious comparison between Judas' heart which Satan corrupted (John 13:2) and a good heart which the new apostle must possess (Acts 1:26). This example illustrates how important it is to select workers with great hearts.

2. *The early church possessed penitent and submissive hearts.* Another occurrence of the word, "heart," occurs in Acts 2:37. When the preaching of Peter disturbed his Jewish hearers as he exalted Jesus as "Lord and Christ" and convicted them of crucifying the Son of God, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The succeeding verses attest to the conversion of about 3,000 souls. The hearts of these men and women were pricked or convicted by their evil deeds as they understood the significance of their crime and the sacrifice of Jesus. These hearts turned penitent and submissive as they obeyed the words of Peter to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Long ago, Jeremiah wrote, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29).

3. *The first century church was united in heart.* The next occurrence of the word "heart" appears in Acts 2:46 when the early church is described as having "one heart and one soul." Unity based on doctrine is crucial to the New Testament church. Paul reminded the Corinthian church of the fellowship which they had with one another and Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Then he rebuked them for their divisions and urged them to be of the "same mind and of the same judgment"

(1 Corinthians 1:10). The singleness of heart guided the early church as they fulfilled their responsibilities to God.

4. *The first public sin to afflict the early church involved the corruption of the heart.*

When Ananias and Sapphira lied to God, the Holy Spirit and apostles, Peter asked each of them, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 5:3-4). The sinful words which poured from the mouth of this husband and wife originated from a defiled heart. Jesus warned, "...But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man..." (Matthew 15:18-20). Ananias and Sapphira had evil in their hearts which led them away from God. Solomon exhorted, "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23).

5. *An unrighteous heart led Simon astray.*

A second sin surfaced in Acts 8 when Simon, the former sorcerer, offered to buy the power to lay on hands from Peter and John. Immediately, Peter identified the source of Simon's sin and then gave the remedy to his sin when he said, "...For thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:21-22). An erring child of God must be reconciled to his heavenly Father. That reconciliation begins with making the heart right. A righteous heart leads to a righteous life. Simon responded immediately to the apostles admonition and asked the apostles to pray for him. The church needs men and women who will readily correct their hearts when confronted with their evil deeds.

6. *The church needs men and women who will profess Jesus as Lord and Master.* In Acts 8, the Ethiopian nobleman was told to "believe with all thine heart" (Acts 8:37). This belief in Jesus as the Son of God manifested itself through the willing confession of this man. He gladly confessed, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). This confession was an acknowledgment that Jesus was and is Lord and

Master. The Ethiopian was willing to surrender his heart and life to Jesus as his new Master. He would follow His Word and live according to His instructions.

7. *A loyal heart depends upon purpose and planning.* One cannot live the Christian life accidentally! Barnabas was known as a great exhorter (Acts 4:36). His message reminded hearers that "with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). The church was plagued with daily persecutions (Acts 8:4). Christians of the first century understood their total dependence upon God. They relied heavily upon their fellowship with one another. The church taught one gospel. It had one mission. It endeavored to evangelize the world. The church's loyalty depended upon aim and purpose. Success depended upon the faithfulness of their heart to God. The apostle Paul described the Christian's giving upon the first day of the week as an act of purpose and planning (2 Corinthians 9:7). Likewise, the loyal and successful Christian will serve God with purpose and with his whole heart.

8. *God needs people with an obedient heart.* In Acts 13:22, King David is described as "a man after God's own heart." David was a man who loved the Word of the Lord (Psalm 119:97). He hid that Word in his heart (Psalm 119:11). He confessed his sins and humbled his heart unto the Lord (Psalm 51:3). He loved to praise God (Psalm 139:14). He watched his tongue (Psalm 39:1). He hated every false way (Psalm 119:104). David loved unity (Psalm 133:1). These characteristics of King David provide an insight to the kind of heart that David possessed, but the apostle Paul points out a specific reason why David was a man after God's own heart. Paul credited God in describing David as one that "would fulfill all my will." Brethren, God desires the kind of heart from His people that will humbly submit unto all of His will. Christians of the first century endured afflictions, made great sacrifices and gave their whole hearts to the Lord as they endeavored to keep the Will of the heavenly Father.

9. *The Church needs hearts that are clean and pure.* Regardless of what others may say and teach, the heart cannot be cleansed without the

Word of God. In Acts 15:9, Peter stood before the Jerusalem council and emphasized that God is no respecter of persons when he proclaimed that the Gentiles, in the same manner as the Jews, purified their hearts through faith. Proof is found in the gospel. The gospel is for all, Jews and Gentiles. Furthermore, the same gospel is for all. There are not various gospels for various cultures and ethnic groups. God desires that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He wants the gospel preached to every nation (Matthew 28:18-20), yea, to every creature (Mark 16:15). God wants to cleanse obedient hearers through His Word (John 15:3). The power to cleanse or the power to save is found in God's Word, not man's devices. The cleansing and saving message is the gospel. The early church was known by their pure hearts which were made clean through the Word (1 Peter 1:22-23).

10. *The Lord has the power to open hearts.* In Acts 16:14, Paul and Silas taught the Word of truth unto Lydia and her household. She is described as one who "worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Like the Bereans who "received the word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11), and the household of Cornelius who were gathered together "to hear all things that are commanded...of God" (Acts 10:33), Lydia's heart was attentive to the words of Paul. She removed all possible prejudice and objectively heeded the gospel. The word of God has the power to open the heart and harden the heart. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Pharaoh hardened his heart when the Word of the Lord was spoken through Moses (Hebrews 3:15). Some of Paul's hearers were unwilling to open their hearts. "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal

them" (Acts 28:27). Whenever the will of man confronts the Will of God, there is a reaction. Either the heart will soften and submit to God's Will or man will harden his heart against the Will of God. The early church demonstrated a heart of obedience. The church was eager to hear the Word of the Lord and follow it.

11. *In our last observation, Paul was a man with a tender heart.* In Acts 21:13, Paul said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" Paul was warned by the prophet Agabus that if he journeyed to Jerusalem, then he would be taken captive. Paul had a great desire to go to Jerusalem and was willing to die there if the Lord willed (Acts 21:13). Once again, Paul found himself in a heart-wrenching position. On one hand, he had a great desire to preach the gospel to his Jewish friends that they might be saved (Romans 10:1). His tremendous love for the Jews is best stated in his own words: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3). Brethren, how badly we need elders, preachers, teachers, parents, etc., who are willing to teach the gospel at all costs! "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12). The church needs tender hearts which recognize that worldly attitudes and ambitions must be crucified for the growth of the church.

Brethren, trace the word "heart" throughout the book of Acts. One will find that "the heart of the church is what the church is in their hearts." What kind of church is the one where you worship and serve? Is it known by hearts that are pure, humble, tender, dedicated, loyal and united? Or is it known by hearts that are stubborn and rebellious? The true success of the church of this century will be measured by its heart just as the prosperity of the church of the first century was measured by its huge, sacrificial heart. Friend, if you want to be like the Christians of the first century, then you must possess the same kind of heart—and it does not happen by accident.—1001 E. Albany Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203

UNITY PERIOD

Steve E. Yeatts

Unity in diversity has become the slogan of various religious groups and unfortunately it has been embraced by some in the church of Christ. The basis for this belief is the concept that although two individuals may have different perspectives on what the truth is, they can put aside their differences and fit under the same religious umbrella. That reminds me of a statement that I heard from a Jewish rabbi, in response to why he did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He said, "Your truth is not my fact." The unity in diversity proponents have that same dangerous attitude toward unity. But the disturbing aspect is that genuine unity is not my truth, or anyone else's truth, it is God's truth and we need to accept it.

The words of Jesus Christ in John 17:21 are as follows, "They that all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Those words are part of the prayer that Jesus spoke to his Father in heaven desiring unity. The Apostle Paul eloquently wrote by inspiration in Ephesians 4:4-6 that "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." If the religious world could (or wanted to) grasp the true concept of oneness, then the cry for unity in diversity would truly be exposed for the oxymoron that it is.

The members of the church of Christ who have joined forces with the religious world support tearing down any recognizable differences between the word of God and the word of men, (contrary to the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 2:13) and rallying around the Unity in Diversity flag. The inherent problem with that concept is that if the Lord's Church puts aside differences in practices, pattern and precept under the guise of unity, it will destroy the very terms that are

required for unity in the first place. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Now the critics of true unity discredit that concept as boring and outdated. Some are even proud to announce themselves as "anti-patternists" because they feel only the few remaining "legalists" in the church of Christ even care anymore about the unity that we as Christians should cherish. I fear that the ranks of those who teach and preach unity are shrinking, and Paul's rhetorical question "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13) is being answered affirmatively by those who are willing to endanger truth and unity because of their contempt for a pattern.

I pray daily for more empathy in relating to people who do not adhere to the theme of unity in the name of Jesus Christ. I pray this because I realize that it was only five years ago when I did not understand the concept of unity either, so I yearn for others to be enlightened as I was. I respect and cherish unity based on the peace and harmony that it brings to those of like mind and like faith who seek after oneness in Jesus Christ. Christians are a diverse people to be sure. Each of us can bring talents and backgrounds to the table that will benefit the Lord in our service of Him. The mere fact that we are different (in educational background, life experiences, sex, race, etc.) has nothing to do with those who attempt to twist the truth and have an open-door policy for people of any religious persuasion. Jesus Christ gave us the terms for true unity for His cause (Ephesians 1:22-23; John 17:20-26, et. al.). It is my hope and prayer that the church of Christ will reach out to all who need the truth, but will not compromise the essential unity that we should revere and obey.—1909 Sterling Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130

SERMON SKETCHES

"Preach The Word"

2 Timothy 4:2



THE WORLD'S BIGGEST LIAR

(John 8:44)

M. W. Kiser



You might be thinking of someone you know who deserves this title. Your "ex-boyfriend," "father-in-law," boss, etc. Jesus gave this distinction to the Devil. What are some big lies the Devil is now telling folks?

I. "THERE IS NO DEVIL."

- A. He would like to fool folks about his existence. Many believe him and poke fun at those who say he is real!
- B. A famous preacher gave two reasons for believing the Devil is real: (1) The Bible says so. (2) He had done business with him.
- C. There are multiple passages of scripture that tell us he is real: (Genesis 3:1-15; Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8).

II. "THE BIBLE IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD."

- A. Doubt was the first seed sown by the devil (Genesis 3:1).
- B. If people really believed it was the word of God then we would:
 - 1. Hear it read in the classroom at public schools.

- 2. Hear it read in the lawyers offices around the land.
- 3. Hear it read at home about the family circle.
- C. The Bible is the word of God (Mark 13:31; John 12:48; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).

III. "YOU ARE NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL."

- A. He wants you to think you are a good person. And so, you will trust your moral goodness to save you.
- B. This lie causes folks to trust in themselves, not Jesus.
- C. The Bible lays the charge of sin at everyone's doorstep (Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-23).

IV. "GOD IS TOO GOOD TO SEND ANYONE TO HELL."

- A. Again, a lie that multitudes of people believe.
- B. This lie would keep people from repenting (Acts 17:30).
- C. The Bible declares there is a hell, and that many are going there for eternity (Matthew 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8).

V. "YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT AS A CHRISTIAN."

- A. This excuse is used often for not obeying the gospel.
- B. The Devil is saying you could not repent if you even wanted to! He would make you the chief of sinners.
- C. Our trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are holding on to him (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:35-39; Philippians 4:13).

VI. "THERE IS TOO MUCH TO GIVE UP TO BE A CHRISTIAN."

- A. Satan knows there is a cost to be counted and a price to be paid to follow the Lord (Matthew 6:24).

- B. He will emphasize the “good times” you are having now, and how dull and bored you are going to be!
- C. Think of what we will have because we are saved (Romans 6:23; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Matthew 6:19-20; 2 Peter 1:4).

VII. “YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO GET SAVED.”

- A. This is perhaps one of Satan’s most successful lies.
- B. Many who agree with everything we have said to this point are listening to this, the biggest lie of all.
- C. You may not have as much time as you think you have. (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Acts 24:25).

VIII. CONCLUSION:

- 1. The Bible is very clear about where all liars are going to spend their eternity (Revelation 21:8).
- 2. That also includes the Devil (Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41).
- 3. Which one of the Devil’s famous lies is ringing in your ears right now? What is holding you back from obeying the gospel? (Romans 6:16-18; 1 Peter 4:17-18).—P.O. Box 2597, Sylacauga, AL 35150

CONCERN ABOUT EVIL IN THE LAND

continued from page 1

and the apostle Paul, who preached that men everywhere “should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). Not only from our pulpits, but by radio and the printed page we must preach repentance to this toward (crooked) generation. The public, the politicians, the priests and worldly pompous preachers must be called to repentance and true conversion. As the prophet was told, “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet” (Isaiah 58:1)—P. O. Box 123, Dunlap, TN 37237

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Dennis Gulledege, Evangelist

TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER ON SUNDAY NIGHT

Allen Webster



Most, if not all, congregations give those who are “providentially hindered” on Sunday mornings an opportunity to partake of the communion and give of their means at the evening service. “Providentially hindered” refers to:

- ◆ Those who were unable to attend the morning service because of sickness (but felt better by Sunday night);
- ◆ Those who had to work (but got off);
- ◆ Those who needed to sit with someone who was sick (but were relieved by someone); and
- ◆ Those who had “ought” against brethren, “left the gift at the altar,” and went to correct it (Matthew 5:24) [and did].

THIS PRACTICE HAS AN OLD TESTAMENT PRECEDENT. Eating the Lord's Supper is the New Testament equivalent of eating the Passover in the Old Testament. Israel was commanded to eat the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, but God made arrangements for them to “make it up” on the fourteenth day of the second month under certain circumstances. He commanded, “If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs...” (Numbers 9:10-11). So under these special circumstances, God still wanted them to eat the Passover. This is parallel to being unable to be at the morning service and then partaking of it on Sunday night (since the communion is a weekly occurrence rather than an annual feast).

THIS PRACTICE PLACES THE PROPER EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING THE COMMUNION. In many modern churches the

Lord's Supper has not been emphasized as it was in the days of the Apostles. Some groups only take it once or twice a year. In a recent conversation, one man explained that he had been a member of a large Protestant group in a mid-size town for three years and had never been in a communion service! In the New Testament, the Apostles gathered on the Lord's Day to partake (Acts 20:7), implying that it was an every Sunday occurrence. [For instance, Albert Barnes, considered by many to be the preeminent Protestant commentator, wrote: “It is probable that the apostles and early Christians celebrated the Lord's supper on every Lord's day” (*Barnes Notes, Vol. 10, Acts*, Baker Book House, 1884, p. 288). Adam Clark, equally well-known, writes, “...intimating, by this, that they were accustomed to receive the holy sacrament on each Lord's day” (*Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 5*, Abingdon Press, p. 851). (Neither of these men, by the way, were members of the church of Christ).] Paul even postponed his journey so he could be in Troas on Sunday for communion (Acts 20:6).

Since it is the memorial of the suffering and death of our Lord, why would anyone *not* want to remember it? It is our lifeline back to the cross (1 Corinthians 11:24-25), and without partaking of it we become “weak and sickly” (11:30). A few years ago the world watched as three gray whales, ice-bound off Point Barrow, Alaska, floated battered and bloody, gasping for breath at a hole in the ice. Their only hope was to somehow be transported five miles past the ice pack to open sea. Rescuers began cutting a string of breathing holes about twenty yards apart in the six inch thick ice. For eight days they coaxed the whales from one hole to the next, mile after mile. Along the way, one of the trio vanished and was presumed dead. But finally, with the help of Russian icebreakers, the whales Putu and Siku swan to freedom. [Adapted from *Illustrations for*

Preaching & Teaching (Larson).] In a way, the Lord's Supper is a string of breathing holes the Lord provides His people. Battered in a world frozen over with greed, selfishness, and hatred, we rise for air each Sunday. Not only does the communion provide us with strength, it is a living bill-board announcing to unbelievers His death (1 Corinthians 11:26). Offering the Lord's Supper on Sunday night keeps Christians from missing such an important event.

THE PRACTICE CAN BE ABUSED BY NEGLIGENCE ON SUNDAY MORNINGS. If we deliberately forsake the assembly and miss communion on Sunday mornings and then think we can just "catch it" on Sunday nights, we abuse this privilege. In the passage referenced above, God went on to discuss someone who willfully skipped the Passover. "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Numbers 9:13). One who could have taken it but did not, sinned, and was to have fellowship withdrawn from him ("cut off from among his people"). This is parallel to someone who decides to sleep in on Sunday mornings and then come on Sunday nights, or someone who wants to watch a sporting event or visit with guests who are spending the weekend at his home, or any other circumstance where one could have been in the service but chose not to be.

Also, if one is traveling on vacation or business, he should not skip the morning service and just say, "I'll be back in time tonight to take the Supper." Under the Old Law (in the above verses) it did make provisions for a "journey" but this was because the Passover Feast took place in only one city—Jerusalem. If you kept the Law, you had to eat it in "the place God appointed." Today, God's church is not limited to one geographic location. It meets in communities across the world on each Lord's Day. If we plan ahead, [There are books (e.g., *Where The Saints Meet*) that list all the congregations in the world with address, times of services, and phone numbers.] we can meet with the saints even when

we are out-of-town. It is wrong to drive by congregations, forsake the morning worship, and then get back in town and take the Lord's Supper on Sunday night.

God is strict about forsaking His worship: "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" (Hebrews 10:25-26). In Old Testament times, one man was caught picking up sticks on Saturday—a violation of the command to, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). They were not sure what to do with him. After all, he had only violated one command one time. He probably even pled, "I promise I'll never do it again." But when they asked God what to do, He commanded them to stone him to death. And they did (Numbers 15:32-36). God doesn't want us to go into the stoning business, but He will judge each according to his deeds on the last day (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15).

We should make sure we partake of the communion each Sunday it is physically and spiritually possible. If we have willfully forsaken the assembly, then we should repent of it, confess it publicly (James 5:16), and resolved to do better in the future.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist

"BE CAREFUL LITTLE EYES WHAT YOU SEE!"

Tracy Dugger



"Isn't television great?" Perhaps you have heard these words uttered from the mouth of one impressed with today's programs. My answer to the question is, "Yes, if you're the devil." Satan has used a technology, which is not

inherently evil, to spread his ungodly influence on our society. Don't misunderstand, there are some wonderful programs for both children and adults. In these often rare instances, TV can be a beneficial tool for learning and also a relaxing avenue of entertainment.

We teach our children the song, "*Be Careful Little Eyes What You See*." Do we make it difficult for them to practice this song? We have a grave responsibility in protecting our children against the perverse "speaking" of men today (Ephesians 6:1-4). No amount of "V chip" technology will remove our parental responsibility. What about our own selves? Are we careful what our "little eyes" see? Our "eyes," as well as our children's, will not have to look far to find Hollywood belittling God and the Bible. One does not have to "channel surf" long to see programs which mock creationism or celebrate promiscuity. Many use TV as a "pulpit" to promulgate liberal views such as the acceptance of homosexuality as an "alternative lifestyle." It is not uncommon to hear vulgar speech and filthy language from channel to channel. Why is it we would not allow someone in our homes to use such language but we allow it to come into our living rooms via the "squawk box"? Have we become numb to such language?

Again, there is programming which can teach our children many beneficial things regarding our world, but on the other side there are many things which will corrupt their minds. Many in our society are very concerned about children having easy access to guns and knives. Certainly

these are dangerous for children to play with. But a greater danger is what appears on the TV screen. It can be the most dangerous object in one's home. It can corrupt and destroy the minds of our pure children. If we are letting our children watch what they choose and if we are allowing them to be their own monitors, we are making a bad mistake, the fruits of which will bear ungodliness. Regardless of whether we want to admit it, the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 are very true: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Parents, what kind of example are we setting for our children? What programs do we watch? Would we be ashamed to invite Jesus over to watch them with us? Do we enjoy watching much of the trash which can be found on cable? If we do, we need to repent! In Romans 1, Paul enumerates various sins of the Gentiles and the spiritual consequences:

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (verses 29-32).

Did you notice what was said in verse 32? Read these words again: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Not only is the judgment of God upon those who practice these works of the flesh but upon those who enjoy hearing about and watching such things. Could this not fall into the category of watching things on

TV which are full of ungodliness? Absolutely!

We must be careful in not being conditioned to accept sin. Envision a new TV program in the Fall line-up. When we first see it we are appalled at the ungodliness and impurity, but we do not change the channel. The next week it is still appalling but we tolerate it. Before too long we are not offended in any way and add it to the list of our favorite programs. This is very dangerous.

Consider how TV affects the church. It is often a rival to church work—to visiting, personal work, fellowship, etc. We will spend hours sitting in front of the TV but have no time for the Lord—studying, prayer, visiting, etc. The “lord” for some people is not Jesus Christ, but a 27 inch, hi-fi, color TV. The following illustrates my point and is unknown in its authorship:

The 23rd Channel

The TV is my shepherd, I shall not want.

It makes me lie down on the sofa.

It leads me away from the Scriptures.

It destroys my soul.

It leads in the paths of sex and violence for the sponsor's sake.

Yea, though I walk in the shadow of my Christian responsibilities,

There will be no interruption,

For the TV is with me.

Its cable and its remote control,

They comfort me in the presence of my worldliness.

It anoints my head with humanism.

My coveting runneth over.

Surely laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of watching TV forever.

Brethren, we need to have the conviction and determination to turn off corrupt TV shows. We need to take opportunities to write sponsors, politicians, and networks to express our opposition to such programming. It works! Many local stations have refused to air such shows as NYPD, an episode of Ellen, etc., because of the

community opposition. Always remember, MONEY is the only way that some will listen. Threaten to boycott products—I assure you that this will get their attention.

Again, “*Be Careful Little Eyes What You See*” is a fitting title to govern our own television viewing. Let us ever heed Paul’s warning, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).—823 North Main Street, Malvern, AR 72104

HONDURAS MISSION WORK

Bill Dillon

Warren Larson, a member of the College and North Streets Church of Christ, has made several trips to do mission work in the Central American nation of Honduras. Warren has a zeal to reach the lost. About three years ago he began working with A. J. Hendrix, gospel preacher in Cape Fair, Missouri, to assist him in his evangelistic efforts.

Warren was in Honduras when hurricane Mitch hit last October (1998) and flood waters got seven feet deep in houses and left around four feet of mud covering the area.

On his most recent journey, Warren brought some financial help to some of the stricken churches. In addition, thirty-seven precious souls obeyed the gospel through the excellent lessons and teaching done by Warren and A. J.

Much lasting good is being done by such efforts. Anyone desiring additional information on how to participate or contribute to this Honduran evangelistic work may contact: A. J. Hendrix, Church of Christ, P. O. Box 156, Cape Fair, MO 65624 or Warren Larson, College & North Church of Christ, P. O. Box 880, Mountain Home, AR 72654.

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2 Peter 1:5



THE BURDENS OF LIFE

Guy F. Hester



Three passages of Scripture will serve as a basis of this study. They are found in Galatians 6:5; 6:2 and Psalm 55:22. Paul said, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5). Prior to this, he said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Then from the pen of the Psalmist, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

It is the fate of all men everywhere to have burdens. Concerning the burdens of life that are common to all men, the inspired apostle Paul said, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened" (2 Corinthians 5:4). The deepest and heaviest burdens are not always seen. If we only knew what fierce battles some men and women are fighting, what mighty burdens they are bravely carrying, that would teach us lessons of restraint and charity, and cause us to be less harsh in our judgments of others.

Some years ago Ripley listed Galatians 6:2 and Galatians 6:5 as contradictory scriptures. This may seem so on the surface. However, in Galatians 6:2, the word "burden" is from the Greek *baros* which means "load." This may be a "burden" or "load" of difficulty, sorrow or pain. We can, and should bear one another's burdens of

this sort.

In Galatians 6:5 the word "burden" is from the Greek *phortion* which means "pack." This "pack" is the whole of one's duties before God, for which each one is personally responsible. Hence, Every man shall bear his own "pack." Therefore, this pack is to be distinguished from the heavy loads of verse two.

The Bible teaches us to do three things with our burdens: 1) "Every man shall bear his own burden." 2) "Bear ye one another's burdens." 3) "Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

FIRST, "EVERY MAN SHALL BEAR HIS OWN BURDEN." Some of our burdens are non-transferable. The Lord has given to each man his own work. Jesus said, "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark 13:34). Then Paul said, "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:4). There are some things that each must do for himself. Nobody can do them for you. Nobody can be baptized for you. Nobody can perform your Christian duties for you. Nobody can answer at the judgment bar of God for you (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Nobody can get lost in the crowd and hide behind others (Psalm 33:13; Hebrews 4:13). The Lord even knows the very secrets of your heart for which you are accountable to Him. "Every man shall bear his own burden."

SECOND, "BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS." Some burdens are to be shared with others. Paul wrote, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). It is always proper to note words of Scripture in their setting. The key to Galatians 6:2 is found in verse one, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." So in mutual burden bearing we should seek to help those about us who have gone astray. We should not denounce them or throw stones at

them, but seek in love to restore them.

In the original text the word “restore” was used to mean “to set in joint again,” just as a dislocated joint or bone is set in joint again by an orthopedic physician. Hence, restore him by your sincere reproofs and fervent exhortations. Let us take special note of the spirit in which it is to be done: “In the spirit of meekness.” Not in wrath, but in gentleness. Many needful reproofs lose their effectiveness when given in the wrong spirit. But when they proceed from a sincere affection and concern for the welfare of those to whom they are given, they are likely to make a good and effective impression.

But Galatians 6:2 has a broader meaning. We are to help those who have a burden of sorrow: “Weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). What a great comfort it is when our hearts are burdened with sorrow and grief to have fellow Christians sympathize and share with us when our hearts are breaking.

We are to help those who have the burden of leadership. The elders of the church collectively and individually bear a heavy load and need the help of every one of us. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17). It is within the power of each of us to make the burden of the elders lighter by cooperating with them in the work of the Lord.

We are to help those who have the burden of preaching the gospel without fear or compromise. Paul asked for the prayers of the brethren that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak (Ephesians 6:18-20). Often times it literally causes the preacher to tremble to say the things that he must say in order to be a “faithful minister of Christ” (Colossians 1:7). Never should a preacher of the gospel become your enemy because he tells you the truth (Galatians 4:16).

How may we help others bear their burdens? One way is by constantly believing in people. I do not believe in the system of espionage

which is forever spying on people to catch them in moments of weakness and faults. The men who were chosen by Christ to be his apostles were far from perfect, yet look at the confidence that he had in them.

Another way is by encouraging others. Paul said, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). The ASV says, “Encourage the fainthearted.” All of us need encouragement and this is a way in which we can “bear...one another’s burdens.”

THIRD, “CAST THY BURDEN UPON THE LORD.” Some burdens are beyond the reach of human effort and aid. These are to be cast upon the Lord, for in these he has promised to sustain us. If we cast our burdens upon the Lord, he will do one of two things: He will remove it, or he will give us strength to bear it.

Likely you have sometimes gone into some deep Gethsemane and poured out your heart, “Father, if it be thy will, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.” In His grace the cup was removed. But if it was not, he gave you the strength to bear it. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He prayed three times that it might be removed and it was not removed, but God gave him strength to bear it (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). So with life’s unbearable burdens, we should cast them upon the Lord. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:5-7).

Let us be willing to assume those burdens of responsibility that are ours, those burdens of duty that are non-transferable. Let us be conscious of the burdens of others. Those loads that we can help others lift, for truly we are our brother’s keeper. Let us cast our burdens of disappointment, of fear, of failure, and of sin, upon the Lord.—
1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

INTERESTING INQUIRIES

"Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?"

Acts 8:30

PROSPERITY AND MORALITY

John T. Polk, II



"America is the richest nation on earth—doesn't that make it the best, most moral nation on earth?"

Not at all. Riches can be deceiving and often are mistaken for spiritual values. It is true that all blessings come from God. "Every good

gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). It is also true that the Devil causes misinformation, misunderstanding, and misuse about those blessings. The Devil "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), is "the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), "had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14), and uses "wiles" instead of truth (Ephesians 6:11). Hence what God gives and how godless men view it are two entirely different things! "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'...and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Nebuchadnezzar, the king, boasted of "this great Babylon [modern Iraq, jtpII] that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty" but God took him down for seven years, then replaced him as king to learn "that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Daniel 4:32).

First, how does having a \$4 trillion debt make America rich? By living on borrowed money (a.k.a. "credit") one may have a house, car, clothes, and conveniences, but should the creditors demand full payment or repossess the goods, one would find out exactly how poor one is! "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). An American myth seems to be that "credit is cash" or "I own what is not mine."

Second, material prosperity doesn't guarantee moral goodness. A "very rich" man did not follow Jesus (Luke 18:18-23), but "a rich man from Arimathea" did (Matthew 27:57). Moral goodness doesn't guarantee material prosperity but frees one to truly "live above one's means" i.e. not being "choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life" and spiritually unfruitful (Luke 8:14). Preachers of a "gospel of greed" insist that "godliness is a means of gain," but Paul said they are corrupt and without truth, and "from such withdraw yourself" (1 Timothy 6:5). The truly poor, however, are those who never accept Jesus' teaching on the use of wealth: "Give, and it will be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). "Covetous clergy" always add "to me" to God's command to "Give."

Third, the "wise" pray, "Two things I request of you (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the good allotted to me; lest I be full and deny you, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9). Whether in times of depression or inflation, many have made their life's goal "to make money," but wisdom says, "Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:4-5). Alexandre Dumas said in "Camile" in 1852, "[money] is a

good servant but a bad master.” Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). With the word “mammon” he broadened the application to anything trusted or relied upon for one’s well-being besides God. Timothy was to “command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). Glossy Gazettes numb minds with their daily fix of “this is the best economy of all time,” thus security is placed in politicians and not in God for blessings, and “uncertain riches” rule our lives. “Indentured slaves” helped produce the USA, but “indebted slaves” now populate it.

Jesus warned that “treasures on earth” were subject to destruction by moth and rust or be stolen by thieves (Matthew 6:19). How uncertain are riches? Coins began to be used in Asia Minor about the 7th century B.C. Shavings from coins could be melted into new coins, thus diminishing each coin’s value. The “milling” around the edges made shaved coins easy to recognize. Paper money may lose its face value if: 1) nothing of material value is backing it; 2) more is printed without regard to its backing value; or 3) an arbitrarily set value system is changed. Money should represent something of value such as work, merchandise, or precious substance. If a “minimum wage” is raised with no corresponding increase in work for it, then the dollars have been “de-valued” or cheapened! When money is “de-valued” it takes more of it to buy items, and that is termed “inflation.” The 20th Century has seen many countries conquered by “communism/ socialism” because the inflationary spiral kept “shaving” off the value of a country’s money until totalitarian “communism” seemed necessary to control it. Inflation pushes tax-payers into higher income brackets and is a great money-maker for a Government of Greed! An Old Testament expression for “inflation” would have been “dishonest scales.” “Diverse weights are an abomination to the Lord, and dishonest scales are not good” (Proverbs 20:23). If a morally bankrupt government “remodels” its money, citizens should beware. Jesus said money systems belong to Caesar but the things of real value come from God

(Luke 20:20-26). No human government should be given our spouse, children, health, houses, food, churches, benevolence, or complete allegiance, but to God only. “The things that are God’s” give true value to Christian living and are based on God’s Word (Psalm 119:72); Jesus’ love and blood (Romans 5:6-10; 1 Peter 1:17-23; John 10:17-18; Romans 6:3-7); and Heaven’s riches (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:8-11). This value system never changes with inflation, nor does God “de-value” what men must do to obtain it (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 12:1-2).

Fourth, know that God is not against all the rich nor for all the poor, for “the Lord is the maker of them all” (Proverbs 22:2). Jesus warned of the difficulty of “those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24-25), but He also commended the contribution of the poor widow who “put in all the livelihood that she had” (Luke 21:1-4). “He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty” (Proverbs 22:16). Christians should “remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10), but not those who “will not work” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Jesus said, “the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always” (John 12:8). After a 30 year “War on Poverty,” and billions of expenses, there is the same percentage of poor in America as before!

Fifth, no society is prospering when: gains are by: bribery (Proverbs 17:23); robbery (Proverbs 29:24); “taxing” the righteous (Proverbs 24:15-16; dishonesty (Proverbs 13:11; 20:17); remarking boundaries [a.k.a. “property tax reassessment”] (Proverbs 23:10-11); lying (Proverbs 21:6); “lotteries” (Proverbs 20:21). Losses include: respect (Proverbs 11:16); good reputation (Proverbs 22:1); good character (Proverbs 19:1; 28:6); truthfulness (Proverbs 19:22); peacefulness (Proverbs 17:1); goodness of life (Matthew 16:26-27); wisdom and understanding of God’s Word (Proverbs 16:16).

Not “credit buying” but “credit living” can save this, or any country, for those who know their indebtedness to God will obey the Gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 6:1-23; 13:8-10).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

READERS' RESPONSE

"How Readest Thou?"

Luke 10:26

OUTSTANDING & SOUND GOSPEL LITERATURE

Bob Kiser of Abilene gave me several back issues of your publication which I found to be outstanding, sound Gospel literature. I should like to be added to your subscription list. Gene Y. Jarnagin, Stephenville, TX.

ENJOYS THE ARTICLES

Thank you for sending the *Gospel Gleaner* to us. We enjoy the articles and look forward to the next edition. Ira J. Clark, Millington, TN.

GG ADDED TO GUS NICHOLS LIBRARY

I would like to start a subscription to this for our library. Please contact me with the price and frequency. Thank you. Dena Lahue Luce, M.L.S., Public Services Librarian, Faulkner University, Gus Nichols Library, Montgomery, AL.

BOTH ENJOY EACH ISSUE

Please accept our small gift as a thank you for sending us the *Gospel Gleaner* each quarter. We both really enjoy reading it from front to back each time. Keep up the good work and may God bless you. Emerson & Ruth Plylar, Kissimmee, FL.

FOUND US ON THE WEB

I hope this letter finds all well with the work you are presently engaged in. I downloaded the address of your publication from Garland Robinson's web site. I would be very grateful if you could send the publication to me. Thank you so much for offering this work and may God continue to richly bless your efforts. If I may be of service in any way to the work or to you, please let me know. Freddie Shows, Jonesboro, LA.

GOSPEL GLEANER
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AN ESPECIALLY HELPFUL ARTICLE

I have had a change of address once again. Not long ago I was preaching the gospel in Bonne Terre, Missouri, when I began to teach that the Bible was teaching the same message to everyone and that Bible studies should not be "personal opinion fests." Not long after, a move was made to remove me from the pulpit. I had unknowingly ventured deeply into Carl Ketcherside's back yard. I had gone to Missouri in good faith that the eldership there wanted a "whole counsel" preacher, but found that was not the case. Shortly before the above difficulty took place, a contingency of the members there, including two of the three elders, went to the Tulsa Workshop, and came back raving about the liberal message being proclaimed there. As I was trying to deal with this most difficult situation, especially, having only five months earlier, moved my family of six half way across the country, your issue if the *Gleaner*, Vol. 15, No 1. came out. It contained a fine article entitled "A Minister's Apologia." I can't begin to tell you how much this article meant to me (and still does). It really brought home the fact that the minister is "God's man." You have a fine publication and I heartily encourage you to continue the good work. I am now in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada and the congregation here, as well as a majority in Ontario, is both sound and loving. The Lord has blessed us greatly in our work. Dennis "Skip" Francis.

HELPING IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The *Gospel Gleaner* has been a blessing in my life, helping me grow stronger in my faith. Please keep sending me this excellent magazine. Toni Arnold, Union City, TN.

HELPING NEW CONVERTS

I'm a "new convert" in search of sound teaching. I've been given a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* and like what I see. May I please be put on your mailing list? The more I learn, the happier I am, and I'm convinced that your publication can add to that. Scott A. Klaft, Dresden, TN.

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GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 15

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BELIEVERS—BUT NOT CHRISTIANS!

Grady Miller

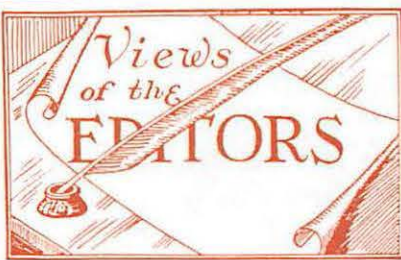
No doubt one of the most prevalent and dangerous of all false doctrines being advanced today is the notion that mere belief in Jesus is enough to save the soul from sin. We hear this deception on every hand, often from those who ought to know better. Ask the average man or woman "What must I do to be saved?" and chances are he or she will reply, "Just believe on Jesus and God will save you." Almost without exception the false teachers of our area exhort the sinner to "just believe, and get saved." How sad it is that this insidious impression will cause so many to lose their souls!

The doctrine that salvation is by faith, of course, cannot be denied. The Bible *does* teach that faith (or belief) is the response that man must have to the gospel message. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line the Bible doctrine of salvation by faith was replaced by the devilish doctrine of salvation by faith *only*. Modern-day false teachers began to instruct the sinner to "just believe" or "believe only" for salvation, in spite of the fact that not one single gospel preacher ever taught such a thing. Today, the deception is virtually complete: sincere folk have been led to believe that salvation is imparted to the sinner *at the moment of belief*. The next logical mis-step from this opening stumble is the contention that we obey God *because* we are saved—not in order to be saved.

It will be seen from a simple study of the Bible, however, that salvation is not by faith only, before and without obedience to the commands of God. In fact, the phrase "faith only" is found but once in all the New Testament; in James 2:24 we read that a man is *not* saved by faith only! Furthermore, we may lay the ax on the root of the "faith only" error by pointing out Bible examples of believers who were still not pleasing to God Almighty.

One good example is found in John 12:42-43. The inspired John records that "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: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Now then, here are some men who believed on Jesus but would not confess their faith that he was indeed Lord and Christ. What condition are they in? Jesus said, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33). In Romans chapter 10 and verse 10 we read that "confession is made unto salvation." The chief rulers "believed on Jesus"—good; nevertheless, they would not confess him "unto salvation." Hence, they were believers—but still lost!

Still another example that supports this truth is found in Acts 26. There, we find the
(Continued on page 19)



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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

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Editorial

HOW VAST THE LOST!

Bill Dillon

On Tuesday, October 12, 1999, somewhere on earth a child was born which became the six billionth living person on this planet. Truly, the rapid expansion of world population growth is impressive. This amazing growth trend has enormous consequences for governments, economists and social scientists and others involved in the population environment balance.

The most significant implication, however, is for the church of Christ. What is known is that the earth's population has more than tripled in the last century. The United Nations, a few years ago, noted that it took from the beginning of time up until 1830 AD for the population of the world to reach one billion, and by 1986 the five billion mark was achieved.

At such tremendous increases, it is staggering to contemplate the enormity of the task of world evangelism. One writer has explained it in the following fashion: "At the rate of a thousand people an hour, it would take one hundred fourteen years to preach to a billion people. If we should begin today, it would require nearly five hundred years to preach just a brief hour-long summary of Christianity to the people now living on earth."

Even at a pace greatly excelling our present speed of reaching the lost—the seeming impossibility of the task is felt. There is, however, a way whereby earth's billions can be reached. If every child of God would teach one lost soul and those two souls in turn teach two other souls and those four reach four more, and so on; such numerical progression would be sufficient to cover the earth with a knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. It is possible to banner the world with the glorious gospel of Christ. **EACH ONE TEACHING ONE THAT ALL MAY BE WON!** This should be the burning desire of every Christian's heart. How vast the lost!—612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653



GOD'S PLAN FOR SAVING MAN

God's Grace
Christ's Blood
The Holy Spirit's Gospel
Sinner's Faith
Sinner's Repentance
Sinner's Confession
Sinner's Baptism
Christian's Work
Christian's Hope
Christian's Endurance



...Ephesians 2:8
...Romans 5:9
...Romans 1:16
...Acts 16:31
...Luke 13:3
...Romans 10:10
...1 Peter 3:21
...James 2:24
...Romans 8:24
...Matthew 24:13

GOSPEL GEMS—A REVIEW

Dennis Gullledge

In 1984, Bill Dillon released a little book called *Gospel Gems*. I was blessed to be a recipient of that volume and have found it to be a constantly useful resource for the past fifteen years. It still has a place among the sermon books of my library and it has been used more than most. The book was the result of articles that appeared in a weekly column in *The Paducah Sun* in Paducah, Kentucky from 1981–1983. Because of the favorable public response that these articles received they were put into booklet form. This book is what it purports to be, a collection of *gems* that sparkle in the light of Heaven's Truth as diamonds in the sky. We typically think of a gem as something small, but valuable. In writing, as in jewelry, a gem is something prized for beauty or perfection.

William Shakespeare once said, "Brevity is the soul of wit." In keeping with that philosophy the articles in this book are both brief and Scripture packed. Bill Dillon is a master at brevity in speaking and writing. With his experience in radio, television and co-editing of *Gospel Gleaner* he has learned that "A drop of ink makes millions think."

Gospel Gems will provide the reader with wonderfully useful material for Wednesday night devotional talks, and seed thoughts for sermons. Especially helpful to me, over the years, have been the articles, "Does It Matter What You Believe?", "The Three R's of Religion" and, "Are We All Headed For The Same Place?" I have used them again and again. Not only preachers, but Bible class teachers and all interested Christians will find this book beneficial in their efforts to learn important gospel lessons and to teach others also.

In my judgment, an especially attractive feature of this book is that it does not shy away from doctrinal and sometimes controversial issues. You will find pointed truths dealing with such important subjects as suicide, atheism, creation vs. evolution, racism, the church vs. denominations, beverage alcohol, instrumental music in the worship, covetousness and salvation by grace through

faith. Bill Dillon has compacted more scriptural truth and powerful points into these brief lessons than some brethren get into an entire volume.

The only thing better than one *Gospel Gems* is two. Thanks to brother J. C. Choate, publisher, not only do we now have the reprinting of the original *Gospel Gems*, but we also have the birth of volume two. Brother Choate saw the value of the original book and encouraged Bill to produce material for a companion volume, which he did. You will want both of these marvelous little volumes for your library. They are small in size: volume one is eighty-five pages and volume two is sixty-five pages. They are, however, huge in value and instructive material. The books were recently number one on the best seller list at the Cherry Tree Bookstore in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

You may order *Gospel Gems, Volumes 1 and 2* from the Cherry Tree Bookstore by calling them toll free at 1-800-882-4668. Or, you may order from J. C. Choate Publications, P. O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967. Phone (601) 283-1192. Fax (601) 283-1191. Email: choate@dixie-net.com. Cost of each book is \$3.00 plus postage.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

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Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist

A REPLY TO AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

Dennis Gullledge



This issue of *Gospel Gleaner* completes five years that Bill Dillon and I have worked together as co-editors. During these years I have been on the receiving end of correspondence that has come in to the paper, and I can honestly say that it has been overwhelmingly

positive. That is, good brethren who love to see truth expounded in a balanced and positive way have told us so. We are encouraged that there are still many knees that have not bowed unto Baal.

Seldom do we receive letters that display an un-Christlike spirit, but such a one has come to us recently. There is nothing that we are doing that would make us immune to the occasional venomous epistle from some brother who is more irritating than instructive, or from the valid critic. Total approval would be a sure sign of something

amiss on our part. Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

A few months ago we received an interesting letter from an anonymous writer. The only clue we have of the origin of this communication is that it is postmarked from Paducah, Kentucky. The writer had neither the courtesy nor the courage to sign his name. An anonymous letter, in most cases, reveals these two basic flaws in the author's character, and, therefore, renders his subject hardly worthy of consideration. In this case, however, we thought it best to print and respond to the letter, not only to expose the folly of the spineless practice of anonymous criticism, but to address a matter of importance to many people regarding the use of small "c" or capital "C" when writing the word *church*. Below, I will reprint the letter in its entirety, and respond to the fundamental fallacies contained therein.

June 9, 1999

Dear Sir:

I note in the most recent issue of your paper that you apparently can't decide whether you are going to use upper or lower case letters for Church of Christ. Of course, it doesn't make any different (sic) anyway, but if your group is going to attempt to be so literal and legalistic, then by all means, do it right!

On page 2, you correctly spell the names of your two sponsoring churches with a large "C". For some unexplained reason, on the SAME PAGE you switch to a small "c" when you talk about the College & North church of Christ. On the back page, you use again the small "c" when typing the name of a church in Ghana but switch to using a large "C" at the bottom of that column when you type North Ridge Church of Christ.

Apparently, those of you who insist that it is more holy to spell it with a small "c" can't decide which way it's going to be. In some languages [Spanish, for instance] organizations are often not capitalized but we don't speak Spanish and in English, the names of groups or organizations are properly capitalized.

The same kind of legalistic mentality that permits people to quibble over a small "c" is also the mentality that permits people to quibble over whether to put the name of a congregation or "church of Christ meets here" on a church sign.

The saddest part of all of this is that some elements in the non-instrumental Church of Christ still hold to the cherished theory that everybody but their little dozen members is going to hell. At the same time, these very people spend their lives arguing over whether to use a upper or lower case "C" or "church of Christ meets here" on a sign!

It is regrettable that our correspondent felt compelled to complain about something that he admits doesn't make any difference anyway. He would be better advised to expend his energies on things that do matter. As far as arguing over the matter, as he states in his last line, I think our readers can see who is clearly the disputant.

The gist of this letter brings up an interesting thought. From time to time it is insisted that the word *church* must always be written with a small "c" and that to use a capital "C" would tend to denominationalize the church by giving it a proper name. For example, many denominational writers capitalize the word *church* in the expression "Church of Christ" to refer to the so-called one, universal, denominational church body. We should applaud this brother's caution, but test the reasoning and the conclusions behind it to see if they are correct. I offer just a few thoughts for our consideration.

First, sometimes a word is capitalized in order to indicate uniqueness. This is true in the Bible where Paul said that there are "gods many," but also that there is only "one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). There are "many sons" of God, but only one "Son" of God (Hebrews 2:10; 1:2). The translators capitalized these terms in order to show the difference between them. Would it not be permissible to capitalize the word *Church* in order to distinguish it from the churches of men? One will note, however, that the word *church* is never capitalized in the New Testament. There was no comparison to make since there was but one church in the first century and Protestant denominations did not then exist (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Since no such comparison was made with the *church* in the New Testament it would be foolish to be dogmatic on this point and turn the case of the letter "c" in the word into a heated issue.

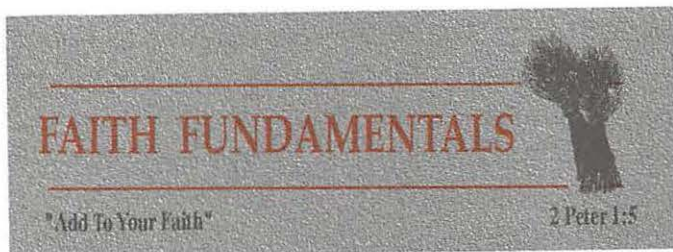
Second, the Greek text will not help much in this controversy because the earliest manuscripts were *uncials*, i.e., every letter was a capital. In his Greek-English interlinear of the New Testament, George Ricker Berry stated his policy of capitalizing the names of deity. After addressing the difficulty of determining, in every

instance whether the Greek word *πνευμα* (*Spirit*) has reference to the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, Mr. Berry said, "It was judged best to put the small π everywhere."ⁱ He explained his policy in the English translation: "In the English we have been obliged to put a capital S when the Holy Spirit was referred to and so have retained it where we thought this was the case; but in some places it is really doubtful, and becomes a question for spiritual judgment of the reader."ⁱⁱ Mr. Berry was willing to do what our objector is not, that is, leave it up to the spiritual judgment of the reader, or, in our case, the editors.

Third, along this same line it is interesting to note that if the word "church" in *Church of Christ* must not be capitalized (as some insist), then we must also object to "Christ" being capitalized. Like the word *church* the term *Christ* is not a proper name either, but simply one of several designations for Jesus. We would think it strange if the word Christ was not capitalized in our English translations, yet the capitalization is absent in the Greek. Again, in Berry's interlinear the reader will find a Greek capital for the Ι in *Ιησους* (Jesus), but a lower case letter for the χ in *χριστος* (Christ).

The flip side of this contention is that we should capitalize *Church of Christ* for the very purpose of showing that we are a denomination. This appears to be the point that our critic is arguing as he thinks that the use of a small "c" is pompous and wants us to admit to being a denomination, i.e., "non-instrumental Church of Christ." We, however, are far from willing to admit something so ludicrous based solely upon our critic's judgment. On the other hand, if our objector could show what Scriptural violations in either teaching or practice that we are guilty of, there might be something to discuss. This he cannot do and therefore he wishes to dispute with us in the realm of opinion.

One might prefer to use the small "c" in the word *church*, since this is the way it is rendered in the New Testament. To capitalize the word, however, does not constitute a violation of Scripture anymore than capitalizing or not
(Continued on page 11)



“WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION”

Guy F. Hester



The title of this article, “We’re Marching to Zion,” is one of the beautiful hymns that many of us love to sing and is filled with glorious meaning to the Christian.

“Come we that love the Lord,
And let our joys be known;
Join in a song with sweet accord,
Join in a song with sweet accord,
And thus surround the throne,
And thus surround the throne.

~ ~

“Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But children of the heav’nly King,
But children of the heav’nly King,
May speak their joys abroad,
May speak their joys abroad.

~ ~

“The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heav’nly fields,
Before we reach the heav’nly fields,
Or walk the golden streets,
Or walk the golden streets.

~ ~

“Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We’re marching thro’ Immanuel’s ground,

We’re marching thro’ Immanuel’s ground,
To fairer worlds on high,
To fairer worlds on high.

~ ~

“We’re marching to Zion,
Beautiful, beautiful Zion;
We’re marching upward to Zion,
The beautiful city of God.”

The apostle Paul wrote, “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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:16-17).

The subject of singing is one of no little importance because it is a Bible subject and all Bible subjects are important. The Bible very clearly teaches that singing is a part of scriptural worship. God’s word tells us how to be saved from our past sins and it also tells us how to live and worship as children of His that we may be saved eternally at last. In other words, the Bible contains full instructions relative to our worship, and according to the passage just noted, one way in which a Christian is to render praise and devotion to God is by singing. We also learn from the text just stated that one of the prerequisites to scriptural singing is to be filled with a knowledge of God’s word. The writer said, “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.” Hence, Christians should be thoroughly familiar with the scriptures which tell us how to sing. We learn from Matthew 26:30 that after Jesus had instituted His Supper with His disciples “they sung a hymn, and went out into the mount of Olives.” The things which Christ did while He was here on earth were examples for Christians to follow. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, said, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19). The writer of the Hebrew letter, in a prophecy concerning Christ, said, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I

sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12). Then James said, “Is any among you...merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). Indeed, there is great and wonderful power in the right kind of singing.

Singing is a very effective method of teaching. Paul said, “Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” We can teach sinners the facts concerning the death of Christ and its meaning by singing such songs as “There Was One Who Willing To Die In My Stead.” Another fact of the Scriptures is that the blood of Christ is the cleansing power, and only atonement for the sins of mankind (1 John 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14). The great songs about the blood of Christ teach the importance and value of the blood of Christ and the connection between the blood of Christ and obedience (Romans 6:3-4).

There are songs concerning the splendor and beauty of heaven. Songs that inspire and encourage weak church members. Songs that teach the importance of prayer. Songs that will lift us when we are down in spirit. “Does Jesus care when my heart is sad? O yes he cares, I know he cares.” “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

WE'RE MARCHING TO ZION

There are so many great and important lessons that could be presented based upon the words of this song but for the sake of space we will use only a few of the most obvious. First let us take a look at the background of the word “ZION.”

The word “ZION” is the transliteration of the Hebrew and Greek words that originally referred to the fortified hill of pre-Israelite Jerusalem between the Kedron and Tyropean valleys. Scholars disagree as to the root meaning of the term. Some authorities have suggested that the word was related to the Hebrew word that meant “dry place” or “parched ground.” Others relate the word to an Arabic term that is interpreted as “hillcrest,” or “mountainous ridge.”

The name “Zion” was mentioned first in the account of David’s conquest of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9). The phrase “stronghold of Zion” may have referred to only the fortified section of the city. Jerusalem was the name of the city state as a whole and included numerous villages and houses located outside of the fortified area of the city itself. After David captured Zion, he resided there and changed its name to the “city of David.”

Zion was used by biblical writers in a variety of ways. Many of the Psalmists used the term to refer to the Temple built by Solomon (2:6; 48:2; 84:7; 132:13). In Isaiah 1:27, the idea of “Zion” included the whole nation. Zion also stood for the capital of Judah (Amos 6:1). The most common usage of Zion was to refer to the city of God (Isaiah 1:27; 28:16; 33:5).

Zion was understood, also, to refer to the heavenly Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:14; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1). John saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven. This incomparably beautiful city is described in such a way that it is clear that the goal of the whole sweep of biblical revelation (the glory of the nations, the tree of life, a river of life, eternal vision of and communion with God) is fulfilled, and God reigns with His people forever and ever (Revelation 21-22:5). It is in the latter sense that Christians today are “marching to Zion.”

ZION, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

“The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 60:14). “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22). “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1). [To Be Continued]—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

ASSYRIA, THE FIRST WORLD EMPIRE

Max R. Miller



The first reference to a world dominating empire is found in the Bible. Historically and biblically, the ancient nation of Assyria was the first of the five great kingdoms of the ancient past. From the great river in Eden coursed the Hiddekel, “which goeth toward the east

of Assyria” (Genesis 2:14). Isaiah describes Assyrians as those “beyond the river” (Isaiah 7:20). Assyria, as a people and later as a nation, arise in Noah’s grandson, Asshur, an early patriarch of the Old Testament and the second son of Shem (Genesis 10:22). The Book of Genesis records Nineveh as one of the oldest cities of the old world: “out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh...” (Genesis 10:11). However, it would be another age before Nineveh became the capital of a world empire.

In early history the territories of Assyria extend from the corner of the Fertile Crescent, near the Taurus Mountains, eastward to the Zagros Mountains, and northward to Lake Van and the Caspian Sea. For modern readers, historically and geographically, Assyria lay north of Babylonia along the banks of the Tigris River (Genesis 2:14) in northern Mesopotamia. The Tigris valley was its most fertile and historical area. The western country was of steppe lands suitable only for a nomadic population. The eastern section was suited for agriculture, with wooded hills, fertile and well-watered valleys. In all, it was about the size of the state of Kansas.

Assyria’s national history began about 1810 BC. Shamshi-Adad I (1813-1780 BC) extended the borders of Assyria from the Zagros Mountains east to the Mediterranean Sea west. He likely was the first to plant a centrally organized

empire in the Middle East. Centuries later, Tiglath-pileser I (c. 1115-1076 BC) sent aggressive marauders into foreign provinces. These plundering bands became occupational armies. Assyria was becoming a world dominating power. The nation flourished into a great power. However, Biblical interest is not in Assyria’s early history and development as a dominant nation. Our interest in Assyria is in its relation to Israel and Bible history.

It was Ashur-nasir-pal II, (883-859 BC) who made Assyria the ruthless power that struck terror into the hearts of neighboring lands. His pitiless conquests and crush of opposition extended the borders of the Empire. The inhuman treatment of defeated foes would not be matched by Attila the Hun, Genghis Kahn, Ivan the Terrible, or Adolph Hitler. With flashing sabers his armies marched west toward Damascus, Samaria and the Phoenician plains. The Israelites, and other nations, were carried away captive and scattered among populations of the world. The Assyrians were a scourge, a curse and a terror to the entire Middle East. In times of its greatest power and expansion, the eighth century BC, its territorial dominion was from the Zagros Mountains, to the Persian Gulf, to Phoenician Plains and the Mediterranean Sea.

In the eighth and seventh centuries ambitious and aggressive kings followed Ashur-nasir-pal II to the throne, leading Assyria in worldwide conquests. Shalmanesser III, Tiglathpileaser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib and Esserhaden united most of the East from Egypt to the Persian Gulf in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. These kings were to have calamitous effects on the tribes of Israel and Judah.

Shalmanesser III, 858-824 BC. The Battle of Qarqar (Karkar) was fought on the Onontes River against a formidable Syrian coalition of

twelve kings. The *Monolith Inscription*, now in the British museum, records a description of this battle. Hadadezer of Damascus, and Ahab of Israel were among allied leaders who opposed Shalmanesser III. The Bible does not mention this incident but does attest to the prominence of Ahab among the rulers of that time. The inscription credits Ahab as commanding 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers. It also confirms that Ahab was on the throne of Israel just before the middle of the ninth century.

On a later expedition Shalmanesser III brought Jehu, king of Israel, under heavy tribute. This event is recorded on a monumental stone, the *Black Obelisk* discovered in 1846 at Nimrod. The humiliated Jehu is actually pictured bowing before Shalmanesser III. Following him are Israelites carrying precious metals and other tribute. The inscription reads, "*The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king, and wooden [word unknown].*" Another inscription preserves a fragment of the annals of Shalmanesser III, on which he also refers to the taking of tribute from Jehu, son of Omri, and dates this event in the eighteenth year of his reign. The date was 841 BC.

Tiglathpileaser III, (744-727 BC), was the potent warrior-king who made conquest to the east and the west. The world submitted to his power. Even in Babylon he was accepted as their king, and there known as Pul. He is cited biblically in 2 Kings 15:19 and 1 Chronicles 5:26. In his inscription he is reported to have taken tribute from Azriau (Azariah of Judah) and in another inscription taking tribute from Menahem of Samaria, doubtless from the event mentioned in 2 Kings 15:19. Another text which probably refers to the same Israelite reads: "*[As for Menahem I] overwhelmed him. L. And he...Fled like a bird, alone...I returned him to his place...gold, Silver, lined garments with multicolored trimmings...I received from him.*"

Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus united forces and attacked Ahaz of Judah (2 Kings 16:5-9). Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser III for

help. The Assyrian king moved again into the west. He took captives in Israel and deported many to Assyria. Pekah was slain by conspiracy and Hoshea was made ruler in his place (2 Kings 15:29-30; 1 Chronicles 5:26). There is a corresponding record in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III: "*Bit Humria [Israel]...all its inhabitants and their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king Paqaha [Pekah] and I placed Ausi [Hoshea] as king over them. I received from them 10 talents of gold, 1,000 talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.*"

Under siege from northern enemies, Ahaz presents himself before Tiglath-pileser III at Damascus (2 Kings 16:10). This event is doubtless referred to in another text of Tiglath-pileser III where he lists "Iauhazi of Judah" among those from whom he received tribute. The fact that he calls the king by this name shows that the word *Ahaz* was probably an abbreviated form of *Jehoahaz*.

Shalmanesser V (726-722 BC) is not seen as a powerful king yet his rule is biblically important because it was in his reign that the ten northern tribes of Israel came to defeat and its people carried into captivity. Shalmanesser V overran Phoenicia (725) finishing the ruthless sacking begun by his predecessor, Tiglath-pileser III. Israel, with Hoshea on its throne, a puppet state of Assyria, rebelled, whereupon, Shalmanesser V laid siege to the capital city. After a siege of three years the city fell in 721 BC, thus ending the Northern Kingdom of Israel forever (2 Kings 17:6).

Sargon II (r. 722-705 BC) extended Assyrian supremacy from southern Anatolia to the Persian Gulf. At the beginning of his reign he deported the population of Israel, which Shalmanesser V had conquered shortly before his death. In the course of his seventeen-year reign, Sargon led campaigns against Urartu and the Medes, annexed numerous states in Syria and southern Anatolia, and defeated the Aramaeans in the central Tigris Valley and the Chaldeans in the lower Euphrates Valley. In order to control this

(Continued on page 15)

SERMON SKETCHES

"Preach The Word"

2 Timothy 4:2

FISHERS OF MEN

(Matthew 4:18-22)

M. W. Kiser



INTRODUCTION:

1. Fishing is a great recreational pastime for many. Some love the sport. They speak of their equipment, lures and bait, rods, reels, and favorite holes.

2. The men of our text were commercial fishermen. They did not always enjoy success (Luke 5:1-5).

3. These men were called to a higher calling...soul winning.

a. The fruit of the righteous (Proverbs 11:30).

b. Turning people to righteousness (Daniel 12:3).

c. Catching men for Christ (Matthew 4:19).

d. Gaining people for Christ (1 Corinthians 9:18-19).

e. Saving souls (James 5:19-20).

f. Snatching men out of the fire (Jude 23).

4. Three aspects to soul winning:

a. Christ saves souls (Acts 4:12).

b. Souls save themselves (Acts 2:40).

c. We save souls (1 Corinthians 3:9).

I. THE PURPOSE OF SOUL WINNING.

A. Men are lost; a condition that will keep them out of heaven (Romans 3:23;

6:23; Isaiah 53:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20).

B. Lost people need someone to care; not someone to condone them (Psalm 142:4; Luke 15:13).

C. The saved have a duty to the lost (Ezekiel 18:3; Mark 16:15). A divine command as much as verse 16!

II. THE PEOPLE OF SOUL WINNING.

A. They are "wise" (Proverbs 11:30). Contrasted to fools!

B. They truly see the need (John 4:35).

C. They have genuine compassion (Matthew 9:36; Exodus 32:32).

D. They are true disciples (Matthew 4:19). "I will make you."

E. They know the meaning of self sacrifice (1 Corinthians 9:19-20).

III. THE POWER FOR SOUL WINNING.

A. The gospel (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

B. Inspiration was once in men (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

C. We now have the inspired New Testament. We can get the same result. No miracles are needed (Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

IV. THE PERSISTENCE IN SOUL WINNING.

A. We will reap if we sow (Psalm 126:5-6).

B. We will reap in due time (Galatians 6:9).

C. Time is short...both for the lost soul and for the soul winner! (John 9:4).

V. THE PLAN FOR SOUL WINNING.

A. We must go (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).

B. We must also send (Romans 10:15).

C. We are to cull no one! (Isaiah 2:2; Luke 24:47).

1. We do not have a racially motivated plan.

2. We do not have a socially

- motivated plan.
3. We do not have a financially motivated plan.

VI. CONCLUSION.

- A. Every fisherman knows three important things:
1. Stay out of sight.
 2. Use the right bait.
 3. Practice patience. (And so it is in the greatest work in the world!)
- B. Someone may say, "I don't like the way you win souls!" Do you know of a better way? If so, then please tell me. It could be true that the way we do it is better than the way you don't do it!
- C. Once there was a young convert lying on his death bed. He was very sad, not about dying, or from the lack of assurance of salvation; but because he was going empty handed.
- D. The grand old hymn "Must I Go And Empty Handed" speaks a great message to our heart about our subject. Have you thought about it lately? —P.O. Box 2597, Sylacauga, AL 35150

A REPLY TO AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

Continued from page 5

capitalizing the word *Scripture* as I have done. It is a matter of judgment. It is sad that one reader should choose to make of it such a strong point of contention.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

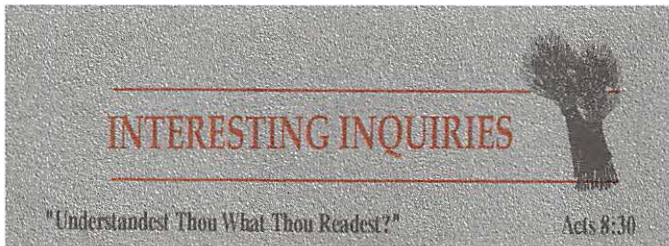
ⁱ George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973,) iii.

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

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“WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THING OF THE 20TH CENTURY?”

John T. Polk, II



The Twentieth Century is tribute to the tiny. The century began with the use of germ warfare in World War I and is ending with the fear of biological terrorism, both involving the use of microscopic life-forms. Humans cannot create life,

but seek to control it with: cloning, replication, genetic engineering, sperm banks, egg donors, and surrogate mothers (much of which is used to support those who are in ignorance of God's Word). War and violence often involve hurling and dodging small chunks of metal (known as “bullets”) fired from guns. The smallest particle (“atom”) was split for purposes which are either constructive (electric power plants, medical diagnoses) or destructive (bombs). Light was divided and amplified (“laser”) and used for constructive (surgery, surveying, welding) or destructive (“smart bombs,” “particle beam,” gun sights) purposes. Radio waves (long and short waves) were discovered and split for broadcast or other communication purposes (Radio, TV, satellite, telephone, pager). Microwaves can be used for communication, spying, cooking, or surgeries. The air was split up into parts for use in flying (helium or hydrogen), lights (neon, argon), healing (oxygen), or freezing (nitrogen). Since the Garden of Eden, humans who have access to

much, focus instead on the little that is forbidden and make the most of it instead of appreciating all the rest (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24). Upon discovering the tiniest parts of God's World, mankind seems to think it has made the world! And being preoccupied with the tiny in God's world, mankind loses sight of God's Word.

All discoveries which help or hurt are simply human obedience to God's Creation Decree: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Human “ingenuity” is but a reflection of God in us (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 93: 94; 115), and earth's “laws” are but a record of God's Power (Psalm 33:4-9; Hebrews 11:3). We who live in such times must be reminded that the Creation of Heaven, Habitat, and Humans should cause respect for God not revolt from God (Romans 1:20-25). Again, look at the whole earth, not just our part, and see what a magnificent life and Wonderful God we have. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

“The biggest thing” in any century is to Obey Jesus Christ. One's own soul salvation is more valuable than gaining the whole world (Mark 8:34-37). Jesus led one blind man out of town to heal him (Mark 8:22-26). Jesus even taught one woman about the water of life (John 4:4-27) and she became an instrument through which many Samaritans believed in Jesus (John 4:28-42). One soul obedient to Jesus Christ can become a great force for good in the world. Everyone baptized into Jesus' death shall arise from it to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-7). “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:11-13).

Service to God involves "microns" (Gk. *mikros*) or that which is "small or little." The smallest of seeds represents the most important of kingdoms (Matthew 13:31-32). Control of the "little" tongue in conversation demonstrates whether a person's religion is vain or not (James 1:26; 3:2, 5). The "least" person in any society is worth the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 8:11-12). In Philadelphia, Jesus commended the obedient for having "a little strength" to persevere in the face of opposition (Revelation 3:8). Service to the "little" people can save a Christian (Matthew 10:42) for the "least in the kingdom of heaven" is greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11). The church of Christ must guard against "a little leaven" for it "leavens the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Service to God involves "atoms" (Gk. *atomos*) or the indivisible. In Jesus' day prevailing scientific theory was that the smallest particle postulated was the "atom," and this word was used for the smallest measure of time ("a moment") it will take for Jesus Christ to raise all the dead at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). The word today might be rendered "nanosecond" or some similar expression. The point remains, that all Christian service is aimed at the "split-second" when Jesus brings all of this to an end. Athletes train mightily for that one-step advantage against an opponent or the clock. So it is for Christians, whose life of service prepares them to "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). In the "atom" of time to come, will we be ready?

The "biggest thing" you or I can do in the Twentieth Century, or the Twenty-first Century is prepare our own souls for eternity (Matthew 25:46).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

THE SHERIFF, THE DEPUTY AND CHRISTIANITY

Patrick Morrison

You may wonder what these things have in common. I, too, have been seeking the bond that ties all of these together. But it appears that I am one of a dwindling majority who has not found the connection. This newest craze is sweeping through the religious world like a brush fire in a drought-laden prairie. I am talking about the newest fad in Bible study (misnomer)—lessons from Mayberry. Someone thought that moral and ethical lessons would be better learned from Andy Taylor than from Jesus Christ, so they decided to implement episodes of the Andy Griffith Show in lieu of studying God's word. Many congregations across the brotherhood now feature a study of such shows, movies, etc., as their idea of Bible study. I guess to many the Bible is passé; after all it is some 2,000 years old. Many congregations are seeking a new calling card in order to draw people to their services.

There are many, many fine congregations and Christians across the brotherhood who have chosen to stick with the only calling card there is (John 12:32). Jesus said that his death on the cross would draw people to him. This is the only way man is going to find God (John 14:6). Try as man might, he will not find God in Barney's antics, Opie's dilemmas, Aunt Bea's cooking or Sheriff Taylor's problem-solving. As wholesome as this entertainment is, that is all it is—entertainment!! It is time for our brotherhood to get back to what made us a brotherhood in the first place—God's word. If we are going to draw people to the church of our Lord, then open up the Book and point people to the cross of Christ!—9 Southern Hills Circle, Apt. #6, Little Rock, AR 72209

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"BAPTISM DOESN'T DO ANY GOOD"

Allen Webster



You've heard it. And discussed it. And argued about it—until you ran out of words and patience. But, you know, they may be on to something. Baptism does not do any good—in some cases.

For centuries, unbelievers and denominationalists have argued against the necessity and efficacy of baptism. Many see it as a useless ritual or a superstitious relic from a dark past. Others divorce it from any saving power. On the other hand, some see baptism as a "cure all." To them, baptism is a magic action through which one passes which immunizes him against any danger of future spiritual disease. The truth lies somewhere in between.

BAPTISM DOES NOT DO ANY GOOD IF...

IT IS NOT PRECEDED BY CORRECT UNDERSTANDING. "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8b). Scriptural baptism requires that one hear and understand that Jesus, the Son of God, died for all (John 3:16; 8:24) and that all sinners must obey Him in order to be saved (Hebrews 5:8-9). It is possible to be immersed without understanding the reasons for it. For instance, many babies are "baptized," but do not have a correct understanding, so their "baptism" does no good.

IT IS NOT PRECEDED BY PROPER FAITH. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). One must believe that Jesus is Divine before his baptism is Scriptural. Further, one must believe that he is lost without baptism for it to be Scriptural (cf. 1 Peter 3:21). If a person does not believe he needs to be baptized and will be lost if he is not baptized, then his faith in God's plan is lacking. In the Bible, only sinners are told to be

baptized (Acts 2:36-38; 22:16), and one who is baptized just to please parents, spouses, in-laws, or friends has not been Scripturally baptized.

IT IS NOT PRECEDED BY TRUE REPENTANCE. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). A person who is unwilling to change his lifestyle (repent) might as well not be baptized, because it would not do him any good. If one does not intend to quit drinking, cursing, smoking, committing adultery, and/or lying, why be baptized? It just makes a mockery of a sacred practice.

IT IS NOT PRECEDED BY A BIBLICAL CONFESSION. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Phillip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36-37). Most religious people in our world do not make this confession at their baptism. Many say something like, "I believe that God for Christ's sake has forgiven my sins..." Where is this found in the Bible? It is not! God said that He forgives sins at baptism (Acts 22:16), not before. If one does not make a Scriptural confession prior to baptism, he has not been Scripturally baptized.

IT IS NOT AN IMMERSION. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death..." (Romans 6:4). Many advocate that one can be baptized by sprinkling, pouring, OR immersion. The Bible does not give such options, but calls baptism a "burial" (Colossians 2:12) and shows that it requires going down into the water (Acts 8:38). The word baptism literally means, "to dip, plunge, or submerge." If one was not immersed, then his "baptism" did not do any good.

IT IS NOT FOLLOWED BY FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN LIVING. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three

thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42). Occasionally, a person is baptized and never darkens the building's door again. Some come for a time but then fall away. Others may continue to attend the services, but their lives mirror the world instead of the image of Christ (cf. Romans 12:1-2). In each of these cases, baptism did not really do any good because ultimately (without repentance) they will be lost.

There is a record of some who were baptized incorrectly in God's book (Acts 19:1-6). They were told to be baptized again—correctly. Why not do so if you need to? Eternity awaits your decision. Baptism will do you good!—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"
(Acts 22:16)

ASSYRIA, THE FIRST WORLD EMPIRE

Continued from page 9

vast empire, extending from the border of Egypt to the Zagros Mountains and from the Taurus Mountains to the Persian Gulf, Sargon divided it into some seventy provinces, each headed by a governor who was responsible directly to the king. In his capital city, Calah, he created a central administrative organization and delegated some of his own power to his son Sennacherib (r. 705-681 BC). Toward the end of his reign Sargon built a new city, Dur Sharrukin, raised his palace astride its city wall, and adorned it with impressive bas-reliefs. He established a library in Nineveh. Trade and agriculture were encouraged throughout the empire.

Sennacherib (704-681 BC), son of Sargon II, carried out campaigns in the West capturing Sidon and secured the submission of Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. He held a long siege before Tyre but failed to take it. Defied by King Hezekiah of Judah, he invaded Palestine and

captured many cities of Judah. He was engaged in a second campaign against Jerusalem. He was active in building, especially in restoring Nineveh to great splendor. He was killed by one (or more) of his sons.

Esarhaddon (680-669 BC). A son of Sennacherib quelled civil war that broke out as a result of the murder of Sennacherib. He conquered the Chaldeans, Medians, and others. He rebuilt Babylon to great heights of splendor. He led two great armies into Egypt (675-669), and at first was turned back by Taharqa, but later (671) defeated him. He plundered the rich city of Memphis and was the first Mesopotamian to rule in Egypt. As a great builder he erected his palace at Nineveh. He was the father of Shamash-shum-ukin and of Ashurbanipal.

Assyria had its day of glory, then its inevitable decline. The death of King Ashurbanipal in 627 BC was followed by a revolt in the court and rebellion in the army. The Medes took the city of Ashur in 614 BC, and, aided by the Babylonians, captured Nineveh in 612. The Assyrian army, led by Ashur-uballit II (r. 612-609 BC), the last of its kings, retreated to Harran, west and north of the Assyrian capital. This defeat marked the end of the Assyrian Empire.—10726 Hwy. 59 W., Burlison, TN 38015

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Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN? #6

Ivie Powell



Several years ago, a young preacher's wife passed a note to her husband prior to the service. One dear sister just happened to glance at the note which had one word KISS. After the services the dear sister told the young man how sweet it was that his wife loved him so much that she sent a kiss via a note to him. After a brief outburst of laughter, the young man explained the note. No ma'am, that wasn't a kiss but an acrostic meaning "Keep it short stupid!" That's a good lesson for parents to remember when teaching lessons they want to instill in the hearts of their children. Of course, if they want more information, certainly comply with their wishes.

HOMOSEXUALITY

From the entertainment industry, the new media and many liberal politicians, as well as liberal theologians, homosexuality is openly defended and accepted as an "alternative lifestyle"! The demand for homosexuality to be accepted under "human rights" and not to be discriminated against is gaining more and more ground. Parents are faced with many questions regarding this subject.

Are people born homosexuals? The answer is no! Homosexuality is a learned behavior and is clearly and strictly forbidden in both the old as well as the new testament. We should teach our children that marriage is for man and woman (Matthew 19:4-6). That homosexuality is a "very grievous" sin according to Genesis 18:20, and is an abomination in the sight of God (Leviticus 18:22). In Leviticus 20:13 the instructions of God was: "And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

Under the new testament, homosexuality is still viewed by God as a "very grievous" sin! In Romans 1:26-28, Paul said: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." After discussing other sins, Paul concludes the chapter by saying: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32).

Don't conclude the discussion at this point. Be sure and tell them that there is forgiveness awaiting any sinner. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul mentioned that at one time some of the Corinthians were practicing homosexuals, but they had repented and obeyed the gospel. God sent forth Jesus to die for the sins of the world and is willing to forgive any and all sinners if they will but repent and obey the gospel (Acts 2:38)! It is really not a question of God's love for man, (John 3:16), but man's love for God (John 14:15).—111 South Curry Street, West Plains, MO 65775

OUR PLEA

No book but the Bible.
No creed but Christ.
No name but the divine.
No plea but the gospel.
No aim but to save.
In Christ — Unity.
In opinion — Liberty.
In all things — Charity.

HITLER: ALIVE AND WELL

Patrick Morrison



Few people have aroused the ire of so many around the world as did Adolph Hitler. Hitler was driven by hatred and lunacy to attempt to exterminate an entire race of people, and to create his own super-human race. Hitler's idea of a super-

human race developed from Darwin's theory of survival-of-the-fittest. In Hitler's warped mind, the Jews did not fit this mold, so he thought he would do the world a favor by eliminating the Jews. Little did he know that this was not at all the desire of the nations around the world. The masses were enraged by Hitler's actions, and they were intent on protecting the Jews and the rest of the world from this madman. The uprising against Hitler drove him to commit suicide. Although the man Adolph Hitler is dead, his ideals and goals which were so despised by the world are alive and well right here in this country.

Since 1973 (Roe vs. Wade), this nation has granted the right to slaughter millions of unborn children, all done in the name of advanced medicine and women's rights. These innocent, defenseless babies are butchered by the thousands every year, yet few in this country lose any sleep over it. The abortion issue has progressed even further with Bill Clinton passing a bill that allows partial-birth abortions. This allows a full-term pregnancy to be terminated even at the birthing stage, as long as any portion of the partially born child remains in the womb. After all, it is only science's attempt to better our society by removing the unwanted and weak from our population. However, any attempt to terminate the life of the child outside of the womb is considered murder. Why is that? What difference does one minute make? To the people in this country, it is the difference between abortion and murder. But God recognizes no such difference. All of it is murder,

and that is the way we should view it.

Not only does this country allow the slaughter of millions of unborn children, but it is now allowing the murder of hundreds of elderly people to be performed under the guise of "mercy-killings." Dr. Jack Kevorkian is doing his best to rid this country of all unwanted elderly in society, and most in this nation applaud his efforts. The removal of all those who can no longer make valuable contributions to society is intended to make this country greater, but to what has this kind of thinking led?

Littleton, Colorado; Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Atlanta, Georgia—just to name a few. Is it any wonder why these things are happening? Can this country not see the reason kids are killing kids? If this country continues on the path it is now walking, insanity will no longer be the plea of choice for defense attorneys. No, just claim survival of the fittest. Whoever was killed evidently did not belong in this society anyway. And you thought Hitler was dead, didn't you?—9 Southern Hills Circle, Apt. #6, Little Rock, AR 72209

TIME, TIME, TIME

Bill Dillon

An old British preacher pointed out there are three kinds of time:

There is clock time, the time of civilized man. This time is determined by the calendar and watch. This time is a continuous straight line; it is the time of history and the succession of events.

There is natural time. This time is the time of the seasons and the circling world.

Finally, there is God's time. There are no clocks in heaven, no straight line of events, nor seasons. Heaven is truly the land of fadeless day; no yesterday, no today, no tomorrow. An old African saying is "God's time is best." So it is!

How good to stop the bustle and hurry of our daily lives and reflect that someday we will see time through God's eyes.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Dave Miller

Another change being implemented in churches and growing in popularity is the formal observance of religious holidays, specifically Christmas. Churches are now placing Christmas trees in their buildings. Preachers are preaching Christmas sermons and congregations are singing

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you...

(Galatians 4:10-11)

Christmas songs in the regular worship assembly of the church. Drama often enters into the picture with churches offering full scale holiday pageants and performances complete with actors/actresses, costumes, and choral productions.

Like many other practices, the observance of holidays in the context of the church as a religious activity is a recent innovation among churches of Christ. It demonstrates a convergence of several worship practices which are foreign to the new Testament: choirs, dramatic acting, female leadership in worship, and religious holidays.

Must we have God's explicit or implicit approval for what we do in religion? Yes. Does God want us to celebrate Christ's birth? Not that we can find in the scriptures, but He has indicated that He does want us to commemorate the death of Christ every Sunday.

With regard to Christmas, two extremes exist among believers. Some clamor for Christ to be put back into Christmas. Others conscientiously object to the Christian's use of a Christmas tree or any other signs of participation. Two biblical principles ought to guide our thinking. In the first place, God has always been concerned with the **religious** implications of practices that the believer adopts. God wants us to refrain from engaging in religious activities that are equated with false religion. Second, God desires that we engage only in those religious practices which are **authorized** (1 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9). If religious activity is not in accordance with written

revelation, it is sinful (Leviticus 10:1-3; 1 Chronicles 15:13; Galatians 4:8-11).

What are the implications of these two divine guidelines? First, Christians do not observe Christmas as a **religious** holiday. As a religious holy day, it is unauthorized. Scripture repeatedly stresses religious observance of Christ's death (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:26), but makes no provision for the observance of Christ's birth. To observe

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).

Christmas as a **religious** activity is to identify one's self with religious groups that worship God vainly (Matthew 15:9). God

wants His people to appear to the world separate and distinct from counterfeit religion (2 Corinthians 6:16-17).

Second, while Christians will avoid using symbols that associate the holiday season with unauthorized religious activity (like angels and nativity scenes), they can feel perfectly free to observe Christmas as a festive **national** holiday (Romans 14:5-6). Decorating trees, giving gifts, and the like, are not necessarily associated with a religious observance of Christmas, as is readily apparent from the fact that thousands of non-religious, atheistic, and Jewish Americans observe the holiday season with all of the cultural trimmings (lights, trees, gifts, etc.). They do so without assigning a "Christian" significance to the practice. In light of the biblical teaching, Christians are to consider the current cultural connotations of any given activity.— adapted from the book, *Piloting The Strait*

"It were far easier to write a book of apostates in this age than a book of Martyrs."—John Trapp

A FEW WORDS ABOUT PREACHERS AND PREACHING

Don Deffenbaugh

My first sermon was preached in 1954 at Stark City, Missouri. By 1955 I was doing quite a bit of preaching at Stark City and Fairview, Missouri. I have since then preached at Columbus, Kansas; Saltillo, Mississippi; Cassville, Neosho, Bona, and Joplin, Missouri over a period of forty-five years. During this time I have had all kinds of experiences—mostly good but some bad.

One thing I have learned over the years is that a good many brethren think they know more about preachers and preaching than the preacher of the gospel. They know what he should preach and how he should preach, how he should dress, how his hair should be cut, and how his family should dress and behave. Especially do they know how his wife should look and what she should do; how many showers she should attend and how many special activities in which she should participate, and what her house should look like. And by the way, the lawn needs mowing. They know what kind of car the preacher should drive and what color it should be, how many friends he should have and who they should be. But most importantly they know how he should spend his time. He should be in the office every hour of the day, but he should also visit hospitals, rest homes, homes of members, new-comers, the bereaved, the visitors to services, and every person suggested by members of the church. He should be totally involved in reaching out to and teaching the lost, conducting Bible studies at every opportunity. He should teach three or four classes at the building each week, preach twice on Sunday, write bulletin articles, help with publishing the gospel in other papers and have time for himself and for his family.

The wise preacher knows he and his family live in a glass house and prays fervently that the Lord will help him to conduct his life properly and use his time wisely. After all, pleasing the Lord is the most important thing in a preacher's life.—via *Four State Gospel News*

BELIEVERS—BUT NOT CHRISTIANS!

Continued from front page

Apostle Paul in chains standing before King Agrippa and teaching him about the Christ. In verses 27-28 we read, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Notice—Agrippa believed the evidence and testimony concerning the Christ, but he was still not "persuaded"—*not a Christian!!* A Christian is a believer, certainly; however, it is obvious that the Christian is also a believer who is obedient to the Lord. A disobedient believer is not pleasing to our Lord.

Today, we must have that "faith which worketh by love" that Paul discussed in Galatians 5:6. Have you believed on Jesus? If so, good; you have taken the first step towards salvation. Do not remain like the chief rulers and Agrippa, however. Confess your faith in Christ and repent of your sins. Then, be buried with Jesus in baptism for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Do not stop short lest your faith be incomplete. Will you not obey the gospel today?—132 Lake Otis Road, Winter Haven, FL 33884

WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO?

Bryan Hodge

So much emphasis is given to what a woman's role is not in the church, that we sometimes fail to teach what a woman can do. Consider the following:

1. A woman can do good deeds unto others. She can make garments for others as Dorcas did (Acts 9:36, 39).
2. A woman can teach her children about God and His Son. Lois and Euncie did (2 Timothy 1:5).
3. A woman can teach by way of example (1 Peter 3:1ff).
4. A woman can instruct a man privately in a non-authoritative manner (Acts 18:26).
5. A woman can teach other women. In fact, such is commanded (Titus 2:3-5).

There are many things that a woman can and must do. The church is blessed when it has Godly women fulfilling those roles which they can do. —Rt. 4, Box 152X, Savannah, TN 38372

READERS' RESPONSE

"How Readest Thou?"

Luke 10:26

ARTICLES ARE EXCELLENT

I have read several issues of the *Gospel Gleaner*. The articles are excellent. I would like to be placed on the mailing list. David B. McElwain, Godfrey, IL.

GOING INTO MANY HOMES

The enclosed check is to help with the *Gospel Gleaner*. I am thankful it is going into so many homes, truth from God's Word is what we need, and that is what the *Gospel Gleaner* is all about. We enjoy it very much. Eva Johnson, LaFayette, GA.

INFORMATIVE AND INTERESTING

I am very happy to say that I really enjoy reading your newsletter and would like to continue receiving it. Thank you for the work that you do in putting together your newsletters, they are informative and very interesting and most of all, spiritual up lifting. I am a member of the Westside Church of Christ in Pensacola, FL., Brother Michael Shepherd is the Minister. I have moved and enclosed my new mailing address, please send future newsletters to the new address. Thank you. Lynda V. McFarland, Pensacola, FL.

REMOVE MY NAME

Please remove my name and address from any future mailings of *Gospel Gleaner*. Mark Fonville, Sherwood, AR.

COPIES OF GG HANDED OUT

I would like to commend your congregation and Mabelvale's on your great work shown through the *Gospel Gleaner*. The copies that we receive through

Ronnie are handed throughout our congregation and are enjoyed and appreciated very much. Thank you for your time. Cade K. Somers, Tipton, IN.

FOUND GG ON THE INTERNET

I am a member of the Mountain Home (Arkansas) church of Christ where this morning your Web address was published. Since I have access to the 'Net, I logged on to check out the *Gospel Gleaner* online. I just want to say that after looking over your Web page I am impressed. It looks good: uncluttered, clean, and functional. So often some brethren want to try to teach everything and convert everyone on one visit to their Web page (which probably won't happen anyway). Congratulations to your Web page designer, your content adviser, and those who decided to go online. Richard and Gevi Jones.

SENDING GG INTO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Greetings in the brotherhood of faithful doctrine. I have been getting 40 copies of your great publication each issue for some years now. Each one of these copies go to a different Gospel preacher or teacher in the developing countries...along with a course on elders and deacons. I would like to receive 80 (or more) copies per publication if possible. This is my own labor of love as an individual (financially that is), so I have no reserve for much help with publication or postage. About once per year I do travel through the Little Rock area, and when I see the Mabelvale sign on the express-way, I think of you in a very pleasant way. If you can help in this way...GREAT, if not fine...just keep up the present great program. James D. Cox, Tustin, CA.

SHARING WITH OTHERS

We so enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner* and have been sharing it with our brothers and sisters in the Weston Church of Christ. Please add the following name to your mailing list. Brother Roy W. Pratt is a fine Christian preacher doing his best to hold a small group together in the community of Weston. Charles L Furr, Alum Bridge, WV.

GOSPEL GLEANER

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