

GOD'S MESSAGE FOR MAN TODAY

BY
JOHN STACY

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INTRODUCTION

In February of 1980 Brother John Stacy made his first trip to India. He conducted a short meeting with the church in New Delhi, but he did not forget this country or the local brethren after his departure. Neither have they forgotten him. He is already planning to return in 1981.

Having worked with several congregations of the churches of Christ in the States, in addition to his pulpit preaching, John has done a great deal of radio work and writing for the local newspapers. Knowing this to be true, and knowing how eager he is to help spread the Gospel in India and across Asia, I requested that he collect his articles so that we might print them and make them available to the people in this great country. In no time at all, the material arrived and now I am happy to pass it on to you, the readers.

No great effort has been put forth to assemble these articles in any particular order. Being newspaper articles, and written on a variety of subjects, we are simply passing them on in this form. I would hope that you will find them helpful and that they will encourage you to be more diligent in your study of God's word.

We make no apology for pointing you to the one church of the Bible and encouraging you to obey the gospel of Christ that you might be saved and that you might be added to that church. We want to encourage

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you and all others to be Christians only and to work with us in our efforts to spread pure New Testament Christianity. By so doing, we and others will be blessed and God will be honored.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi, India
October 9, 1981

SECOND EDITION STATEMENT

I am delighted to be able to reprint this book. The kind of material in its pages should be helpful to anyone who is doing personal work. Not only will it be used here in the States, but it will be sent throughout the world. May it be the means for reaching many for Christ.

J. C. Choate
Winona, MS
February 19, 1985

Introduction

The lessons in this book were written over a period of nine years. They were originally articles placed in the *Tri-City Reporter*. This local newspaper was circulated throughout the cities of Dyer, Rutherford, and Kenton, Tennessee. I preached for the church in Dyer and Rutherford. These articles were used to teach primarily those who were non-members.

I do not claim originality for all these articles. Many are condensed sermons from books in my library, which I thought were worth passing on to the general public. I cannot give credit to whom credit is due but God can and will. This is what counts in the long run.

I am thrilled that J. C. Choate is willing to use these articles in his work to evangelize India and other nations round about. I pray now that they will be useful in spreading the gospel in America as well.

John Stacy
July 14, 1981

D E D I C A T I O N

This volume is dedicated to Max R. Miller, my good friend and co-laborer in the gospel. Max has been a constant source of sage advice. His encouragement to further my education and to continue writing have meant more to me than words can tell. Max, your example has left an indelible imprint for good that I intend to pass on to younger preachers. May God bless you, your good wife Lillian, your son Grady who is also a preacher, and your continued labors in the kingdom of God.

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The New Testament Church-Part I

The word church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means "an assembly, or the called out." Men are called out of the world through the preaching of the gospel. In II Thessalonians 2:14 Paul said, "whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Men are called out of the world through the preaching of the gospel and they are placed into the church. In Colossians 1:13 Paul speaking of God said, "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." Luke, in recording Acts 2:41 says, "They then that received his word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." Here again, when men responded to the gospel, men were added to the church of the Lord.

Let us note some fundamental facts about this body of called out people called the church.

First note the fact that Jesus built the church. Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, ". . . upon this rock (the fact that he was the Son of God) I will build my church." Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, Alexander Campbell, and others did not build the New Testament church! Jesus did! Any other church built by any other

The New Testament Church - Part I

man cannot be the church of the New Testament but simply a man-made denomination which has no scriptural right to exist.

Secondly, note the fact that Jesus owns the church. Acts 20:28 says, “. . . feed the church of the Lord which he hath purchased with his own blood.” No man owns the church. It is not my church or your church, it is the church of Christ!

Thirdly, note the fact that Jesus is head of the church. In Colossians 1:18 Paul said, “And he is head of the body, the church” Pope Paul is not head of the church! There are no popes, archbishops, cardinals, and living apostles today who head the church. Jesus is the only universal head of his church and he is the sole authority in religion today!

In the fourth place note the fact that Jesus is Saviour of the church. In Ephesians 5:23 Paul said, “. . . being himself saviour of the body.” In verse 25 of this chapter we read, “. . . even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” How can we read these verses and say that the church is not important? Anything Jesus died for is important!

In the fifth place note the fact that Jesus is the chief cornerstone of the church. Ephesians 2:19 says, “. . . the household of God being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.” It is Christ who holds

The New Testament Church - Part I

his church together today. He and he alone is the foundation upon which his church must rest. Friends, are you a member of the New Testament church? Did Jesus or a man establish the church of which you are a member? Who paid the price for the church of which you are a member, Jesus or a mortal man? Who is the head of the church of which you are a member? Does the church of which you are a member rest upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets? Is Christ's will or the will of men the controlling factor in the church of which you are a member? You can be a member of the church of Christ which is the New Testament church. Christianity is non-denominational. Study your Bible.

Peter set the terms of entrance into the New Testament church by saying in Acts 2:38, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Those who did this in Bible times were described in Acts 2:47, "Praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The New Testament Church-Part II

The Bible uses many figures of speech to help us understand the true nature of the church. The church is pictured as the bride of Christ in the New Testament. Romans 7:4 says, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye might be MARRIED to another, even unto him that was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God." Paul, in II Corinthians 11:2 said to the church in Corinth, "For I was jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I espoused you unto one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin unto Christ."

With this figure in mind let us ask some questions. What name shall the church or the bride of Christ wear? Just as a woman wears the name of her husband, so must the church as a whole and the individual members bear the name of Christ. Thus, the Bible says that the church is sometimes called the church of the first born, the church of God, the church of Christ, or just the church. Nowhere in the Bible are the names that we are so familiar with today to be found. Search all you want but they are not there. Individual members of the church were called Christians, saints, brethren, and disciples. Check some of these references: I Corinthians 1:2;

The New Testament Church - Part II

Romans 16:16; Acts 11:26; I Peter 4:16. What name do you wear religiously? Do you think it makes a difference?

A second figure used to help us understand the New Testament church is the comparison of the church to a body. In Colossians 1:18 Paul said, "And he is the head of the body, the church" Keeping this figure in mind ask yourself this question, how many heads does a body have? All of nature attests to the fact that a body has one head. Yet, the religious world claims that there are many heads. This glaring inconsistency is another proof of the evils of religious division. Note further in this figure of the body that the Bible teaches that there is one body. In Ephesians 4:4 Paul says, "there is one body" Based upon the fact that there is one head of the church, it is logical that there is only one body! One head cannot serve many bodies. Nature again attests to this fact! Jesus said in Matthew 12:25, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every house and every city divided against itself cannot stand." The church is a kingdom and a house. Check Colossians 1:13 and I Timothy 3:15.

There are those who say: yes, there is one church but all the denominations make up that one church. If so, good reader, find it in the Bible. Is there a book, chapter, and verse for this kind of reasoning or is it man-made? Search the Bible for yourself! Paul said in I Corinthians 4:17, "For this cause, I have sent unto you

The New Testament Church - Part II

Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, WHO SHALL PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE OF MY WAYS WHICH ARE IN CHRIST, EVEN AS I TEACH EVERYWHERE IN EVERY CHURCH.” Notice if you will that Paul taught the same thing everywhere he went. This teaches us that there were no denominations in first century times who were teaching different doctrines as we see about us today.

Will you prayerfully consider the thoughts presented here and compare them with what you have been taught and with what you are practicing religiously? Ask yourself if what you are religiously conforms to God's word.

The New Testament Church-Part-III

The organization of the New Testament church was very simple. This church first of all recognized Jesus and Jesus alone as its universal head. Paul writing in Ephesians 1:22-23 said, "and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." In Colossians 1:18 Paul said, "And he is head of the body the church . . ."

The early church had apostles. These men had to meet special qualifications. As the apostle Peter set in motion the selection of another apostle to take the place of Judas he said in Acts 1:21-22, "Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness of His resurrection."

These are the qualifications for being an apostle and no one today can meet them, therefore there are no apostles in the church today.

There were also men in the church known as prophets. These men were preachers who seemed to wander from place to place preaching and making predictions while under the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament Church - Part III

An example of the prophet in action is seen in Acts 11:27-28, "Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world . . ."

Since the Holy Spirit no longer operates in a miraculous way there can no longer be those called prophets in the church. Remember Paul said in II Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith and not by sight." Again Paul in Romans 10:17 said, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." We don't need miracles to produce faith, we need God's word!

There were men who served as evangelists in the early church. The word evangelist means, "a messenger of good, a proclaimer of good tidings." We read in Acts 21:8 of ". . . Philip the evangelist . . ." Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 4:5, ". . . do the work of an evangelist . . ." Today and always there will be a need for men (not women) to publicly proclaim the gospel. Paul made it plain that women were not proclaimers of the gospel in a public way in I Corinthians 14:34-35 by saying, "Let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak . . . for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church."

The early church also had men designated as pastors. The word "pastor" means "a shepherd." The shepherd of the spiritual flock was to lead it and feed it.

The New Testament Church - Part III

Note if you will, that the word pastor and the word elder have reference to the same office. I Peter 5:1-2 says, "The elders which are among you I exhort . . . feed the flock of God." The elder does the work of a shepherd because these words have reference to the same office. The pastor is not a preacher but one who oversees the flock. An elder may also be a preacher but the scriptural use of the word pastor does not refer to the preacher. Note also the fact that the word bishop or overseer is also synonymous with the words pastor and elder. As Paul talked to the elders of the church in Ephesus he said in Acts 20:28, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to . . . feed the church of the Lord . . ."

The qualifications for elders are found in I Timothy 3 and in Titus 1. Note if you will, that only men serve as elders or bishops. I Timothy 3:1 says, ". . . if a MAN desireth the office of a bishop . . ." Note further I Timothy 3:2, "the bishop therefore must be . . . the husband of one wife!" How tragic it is that the Bible is no longer regarded as the only source of religious authority!

Finally, the church had men (again not women) who served as deacons. Their qualifications are found in I Timothy 3. Note I Timothy 3:12, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife . . ." This qualification automatically eliminated women serving in this

The New Testament Church - Part III

office. These statements are not intended to be against Christian women. They are made to impress upon the reader that it is unscriptural to have women serving in the offices of elder and deacon.

Men must do away with all the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the human innovations and return to the simple New Testament pattern for church organization. God knew what he was doing when he gave us the pattern. Will we call him a liar by doing something else?

The Nature Of The Church

It is quite evident that the church of Christ is the most misunderstood institution on earth today. Yet, the Bible is exceedingly plain in its teachings concerning the New Testament church. To demonstrate the clarity of the Bible on the subject of the church, let us ask and answer the question, what is the nature of the church?

First of all the word "church" itself means, "an assembly of free citizens, called out to carry on the business of the city-state." The church then is, "an assembly of free citizens (our citizenship is in heaven) called out of the world to carry on the business of God." By whom are we called? In II Thessalonians 2:14 Paul said, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, unto the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ calls men through the gospel. Out of what are we called? Colossians 1:13 says, "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." We are called out of the world. For what are we called? I Peter 2:9 says, ". . . that ye may show forth the excellencies of him that called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." We are to tell men of the virtues of God. We must tell men of what God has done for them in the sending of Jesus to die on the cross for their sins.

In the second place the church is the household of God. I Timothy 3:15 says, ". . . that men may know

The Nature of the Church

how to behave themselves in the house of God which is the church of the living God.” We have new relationships in this family. God is our Father. I John 3:1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God.” God is our Father and we are his children. We also have some responsibilities in this family. I Peter 1:14 describes Christians as, “. . . children of obedience.” Not only must we obey God but we must love one another in our family. I John 4:21 says, “and this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.”

A third way of describing the church is to view it as the body of Christ. In Colossians 1:18 we read, “And he is head of the body, the church . . .” The Bible in such passages as Ephesians 4:4 says, “there is one body . . .” Clearly then there is one church! Christ as we have seen is head over this body. The head on the human body directs the rest of the body and the same thing is true with Christ the head of the church. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “all authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.” Christians who are members of the body must remain attached to the head or they will die!

The importance of being in the body or church is clearly seen in Ephesians 5:23 where Paul says, “. . . Christ also is head of the church, being himself saviour of the body.” Christ is going to save the body or the

The Nature of the Church

church! Do you believe that you must be called out of the world in order to be saved? If so, you believe in the need to be a part of the church which is the called out! Do you believe that all of God's children are in his family? If you do, you believe in being part of Christ's church because it is the household of God. Do you believe you must remain attached to Jesus to be saved? Then you see the need of being in his body, the church, that you might not be severed from Christ who is the head of the church! My friends, we can understand God's will about his church! Can you say now that you can be saved outside the church?

Furthermore, let us suggest that the church is the kingdom of Christ. In Paul's letter to the Colossians he writes, "who delivered us out of the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." Paul here, writing to the church, tells them they are in the kingdom. Now the kingdom or church was not established before the cross as some would advocate. Jesus in Mark 9:1 said, "There are some here of them that stand by that shall in no wise taste of death until they see the kingdom come with power." Only after Pentecost is the kingdom or church spoken of as a reality. In Acts 8:12 we read, "And when they believed Philip preaching the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Philip preached Christ by preaching the church and baptism, both of

The Nature of the Church

which are viewed as non-essential by the religious world today! Just as Christ is head of the body, he is king of his kingdom. Paul said of Jesus in I Timothy 6:15, "Who is the blessed and only potentate, the Lord of lords and the King of kings."

How do you enter his kingdom? Jesus in John 3:5 said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Finally, the church is spoken of as the temple of God. The temple in Old Testament times was a place where God and man could meet. Paul in I Corinthians 3:16 said, "Or know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Holy Spirit dwelleth in you?" We learn more about this temple in Ephesians 2:20-21, "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom each several building fitly framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord." Notice then the foundation of the church—the teachings of the apostles and prophets. Notice who it is that holds the church together—Christ the cornerstone. Notice who it is that comprises the various buildings of the temple complex—Christians are buildings that go together to form the temple in the Lord. Christians also function another way as we see in I Peter 2:5, "Ye also as lively stones are built up unto a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable

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unto God through Jesus Christ.” Christians then are priests who function in the temple or church!

In conclusion, do you believe that one must be in the kingdom to have Christ as his king? Surely you do. Then you see clearly the need to be in the kingdom or church. Do you believe you can serve as a priest outside of the temple? Surely no one can. Thus we see the need to be in the temple or church of God.

The Church And The Kingdom

Both the church and the kingdom were proclaimed by first century preachers. John the Baptist said in Matthew 3:2, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus in Matthew 4:17 also preached about the kingdom for Matthew says, "From that time began Jesus to preach and to say, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The twelve apostles also preached this same message. In Matthew 10:7 we read about Jesus saying to them, "And as ye go, preach saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In Caesarea Philippi Jesus said, "And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shalt be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shalt be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18, 19).

These verses of scripture indicate the sure coming of the kingdom and the fact that the words *church* and *kingdom* are used to mean the same thing. If the church and the kingdom are not the same institution then Peter and the other apostles have no right to use the keys of the kingdom on the church. If the kingdom has never been established as some claim, then Peter and the other apostles have never used the keys given them in the first

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century by Jesus! Let us now note three methods to demonstrate that the kingdom and the church are the same institutions.

First they are both entered on the same conditions. John 3:5 says, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Peter on the day of Pentecost uses the keys of the kingdom as he says in Acts 2:38, "Repent ye and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Compare these two verses and you'll see that Peter also stresses water (baptism) and the Spirit (gift of the Holy Spirit). What happened to believers who followed Peter's admonition to repent and be baptized? In Acts 2:41 we read, "They then that received his word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." To what were they added? Acts 2:47 says, ". . . and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

In the second place note the fact that the church and the kingdom have the same head. Christ is head of the church as we see in Ephesians 1:22-23, "And hath put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

Christ is also King of his kingdom. In Acts 17:7 we read of a great uproar in Thessalonica over Paul's teaching and the Jews cry out, ". . . these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is

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another king, one Jesus.” Revelation 17:14 says that Jesus is, “. . . Lord of lords and King of kings . . .”

Finally, note the fact that the kingdom has already come! In Hebrews 12:38 Paul said, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved . . .” Further observe I Corinthians 15:24, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.”

Now friends, the kingdom has already been established and it is the church. Nothing is said about Jesus setting up his kingdom at the end of time. We have shown above in Paul’s writings that when the end of time comes Christ will deliver up the kingdom rather than setting up a kingdom! In closing remember that John, the apostle, as he writes the book of Revelation said in Revelation 1:9, “I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and KINGDOM and patience which are in Christ Jesus” John was in the kingdom! John was in the church! This proves beyond any doubt they are the same institution.

No Church Before Calvary

It is very important to know when the church of the Bible was established because of the many conflicting views and claims made by over five hundred denominations.

Who is right? How can we know when the church was established? As we approach this subject let us begin with specific proofs that show that the church was not established before the cross.

First of all in Matthew 6:9-10 we read, “. . . our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, **THY KINGDOM COME . . .**” **JESUS SHOWS HERE HE DID NOT EVEN HAVE A KINGDOM!** The words kingdom and church can be used to refer to the same thing. See Colossians 1:13 and Revelation 1:9. Jesus taught his disciples in what we call the Lord's prayer to pray for the kingdom to come!

Secondly, if the church was established before the cross, a church existed that could not even tell anybody about Jesus! Note Matthew 16:20, “Then charged he his disciples that **THEY SHOULD TELL NO MAN THAT HE WAS THE CHRIST.**”

Thirdly, if the church was established before the cross it had men and women who did not believe the gospel story. Jesus told his apostles about his coming death and resurrection and in Matthew 16:22 Peter

No Church Before Calvary

said, “. . . be it far from thee Lord: this shall never be unto thee.” On the resurrection day when the women returned to tell the men that they had seen the risen Christ we read in Luke 24:11, “And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk, and they disbelieved them!”

Fourthly, John the Baptist was not in the church! In Luke 7:28 we read, “. . . among them that are born of women there is none greater than John: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Fifthly, Joseph of Arimathea did not know there was a church in his day! In Luke 23:51 we read, “a man of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, looking for the kingdom of God.”

Sixthly, if the church was set up in the days of John the Baptist why did Jesus say in Matthew 16:18, “And . . . I will build my church . . .?”

In the seventh place if the church was built before the cross it had no Holy Spirit! In John 7:39 we read, “But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Can you imagine a church without the Holy Spirit?

In the eighth place Mark 9:1 states, “And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, there are some of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.” This cannot refer to heaven, for if it does, we still have men living who heard that statement from the lips of Jesus!

No Church Before Calvary

In the ninth place if the church was already established before the cross, the apostles did not know it! Acts 1:6 says, "They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Tenthly, if the church had been set up before the cross it would have been a body without a head! Notice Ephesians 1:20-23, "Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Christ only became head of the church **AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION!**

Eleventh, know that the relationship of the church and Christ is that of a marriage relationship. Romans 7:4 says, "Wherefore my brethren, ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye might be **MARRIED TO ANOTHER**, even to him that hath been raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God." If the church was established before the cross, then the church had no husband for three days while Jesus was in the tomb!

In the twelfth place, in Isaiah 28:16 we have these

No Church Before Calvary

words about our Lord, "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, A TRIED STONE, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation . . ." In Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders set at nought, is become head of the corner." These words also speak of Jesus. Peter refers to these passages in Acts 4:11, "He is the stone which was made head of the corner." Paul in I Corinthians 3:11 said, "Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Now the point to be taken is that if the church was founded before the cross, it had as its cornerstone a stone that had not been tried (Isaiah 28:16) because Jesus had not gone to the cross!

Thirteenth, consider the incident of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19. After Jesus came to his house we find these words in verse 11 of Luke 19, "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because **THEY SUPPOSED THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS IMMEDIATELY TO APPEAR!**" If the church had been established before the cross, why were they still looking for the kingdom to appear?

In the fourteenth place, if the church was established before the cross, it would have been composed of people never redeemed by the blood of Christ! Paul in Hebrews 9:22 said, ". . . and apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission." Note also Hebrews 10:4, "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and

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goats should take away sins.” Yet, the Bible makes it plain that the church is a blood-bought institution.

In Acts 20:28 Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, “. . . feed the church of the Lord which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

In the fifteenth place, if the church was established before the cross it would have kept the law of Moses! Observe Hebrews 9:15-17, “And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth.” A will is of no force until the one who made it is dead. We all understand that.

The New Testament did not come into reality until Christ who made it died. The point is, you cannot have a New Testament church without a New Testament! If you want to be in a church supposedly founded before the cross, you would worship on Saturday, you would offer animal sacrifices, you would burn incense, you would have to observe every law of Moses. Yet, the denomination that claims it was established before the cross will not go back to all of the laws of Moses. This is a little inconsistent! Paul in Galatians 5:4 said, “Ye are severed from Christ, YE WHO WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY THE

No Church Before Calvary

LAW; YE ARE FALLEN AWAY FROM GRACE.” We cannot go back to the law of Moses and be saved!

Finally, if the church was established before the cross it had a Christ who did not have all power. Only after his death and resurrection could Jesus say as he did in Matthew 28:18, “. . . all power hath been given to me in heaven and in earth.” How could Christ reign as king of his kingdom without all power? How could Christ be head of the body without full control of all powers in heaven and on earth?

When The Church Of Christ Was Established

In our last chapter we listed **SCRIPTURAL** arguments to show that the church of Christ was **NOT** established before the cross. If we can determine when the church of the Bible was founded we can know if we are in the New Testament church or a man-made denomination!

Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:9, "In **VAIN** do they worship me, teaching as their precepts the **COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.**" There is a great deal of difference between a church that exists today because of Martin Luther's reformation period and the church of Christ established by our Lord through his apostles!

Now let us note from the Bible the scriptural time for the founding of the church of Christ. First note the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2-3, "And it shall come to pass in the **LATTER DAYS**, that the mountain of **JEHOVAH'S HOUSE** shall be exalted above the hills; and **ALL NATIONS** shall flow into it, and many peoples shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for **OUT OF ZION SHALL GO FORTH THE LAW, AND THE WORD OF JEHOVAH FROM JERUSALEM.**"

God's house or church (I Timothy 3:15, "... house of God which is the church of the living God") was to be

When the Church of Christ Was Established

established in the latter days. Note Acts 2:16-17, Peter said, "But this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel, and it shall be in the LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit on all flesh"

Thus, Peter on Pentecost tells us that this is the beginning of the last days in explaining the events of Pentecost. Only beginning from Pentecost in Acts 2 could all nations be the people of God! Note Acts 2:39, "For to you is the promise, and to your children, AND TO ALL THAT ARE AFAR OFF"

Certainly this statement includes the Gentiles for we have an example of Gentile conversion in Acts 10. Before the cross all nations did not comprise the people of God! Consider the place from which God's law was to go forth to all men. Zion was a mountain inside the city walls of Jerusalem and was used as a term to describe this city. The prophets Isaiah and Micah both declare that God's word is to be spoken from Jerusalem. Jesus referred to this scripture in Luke 24:47, and said, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations BEGINNING from JERUSALEM."

Notice the fact that Jesus says the beginning place for all world-wide preaching of remission of sins is Jerusalem! ANY OTHER CHURCH FOUNDED IN ANY OTHER CITY CANNOT BE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. IT CAN ONLY BE A MAN-MADE ORGANIZATION. In Mark 9:1 Jesus said, ". . . there are some of them here that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death until

When the Church of Christ Was Established

they see the kingdom come with power.” Then in Luke 24:49 Jesus said, “And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the CITY (Jerusalem), until ye be clothed with power from on high.” Jesus said the kingdom would come with power and told them to stay in Jerusalem that they may receive that power. Thus we know where and when the church was started. Acts 2:1-4 shows where and when the power from on high came.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST? A lot of people think they are. They are fooled into believing that man-made churches established at other periods are really just branches of the universal church. Nowhere can this be found in God’s word! Think! We must consider this matter seriously, for Peter, as he explains the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10, says in Acts 11:15, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us **AT THE BEGINNING.**” Peter refers to Acts 2 as the beginning of the church age and salvation through the death of Christ.

God's Plan For Religious Unity

The decade of the sixties will be remembered in religious circles as the ecumenical decade. A great deal was said and some action was taken towards the now recognized need for religious unity. A few hundred years after the establishment of the New Testament church, Catholicism arose. Martin Luther hundreds of years later revolts against the apostate Catholic church. Yet, instead of trying to restore first century Christianity to his day, Luther sought to reform a church that had gotten away from the New Testament pattern. Thus, denominationalism was born and the church that Jesus built could not be recognized because of this great division.

Division has continued on to the twentieth century in open rebellion of God's word. Men have allowed human creeds and dogmas to keep them from being the people Christ prayed for in John 17:20, 21 when he prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word, that they may all be one, Father as thou art in me and I in thee, that they all may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Men meet all over the world to devise plans for religious unity. How tragic it is that men have overlooked and downright ignored God's plan for religious unity found in Ephesians 4:4-6 where Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in

God's Plan For Religious Unity

one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, through all, and in all.”

First, notice the Bible says there is **ONE BODY**. What is that one body? Colossians 1:18 defines the body by saying, “and he (Christ) is head of the body, the church.” One head can control only one body! The world says there are many bodies. The Bible says there is one body. Where will you stand?

Secondly, note the Bible says there is **ONE SPIRIT**. This is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives life to the body, just as our spirits give life to our physical body. Romans 8:2 says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Thirdly, note the fact there is **ONE HOPE**. This hope is centered upon receiving eternal life. In Hebrews 6:19 Paul said, “which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast.”

Fourthly, we have **ONE LORD**. Paul, in Colossians 1:18 says, “and he (Christ) is head of the body, the church.” There is no other universal Lord or head of Christ's church!

In the fifth place there is **ONE FAITH**. Jude 3 says, “Contend earnestly for **THE** faith that was **ONCE AND FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS.**” The world speaks of many faiths and the Bible speaks of the one faith. Where will you stand? What will you believe and practice?

God's Plan For Religious Unity

In the sixth place the Bible teaches that there is **ONE BAPTISM**. The one baptism has but one mode and that is immersion. In Colossians 2:12 Paul said, "Having been buried with him in baptism . . ." There is one candidate for baptism. He is a believer (Mark 16:16). He has repented (Acts 2:38). He is a confessor (Acts 8:36-37). There is one purpose for the one baptism and that is to complete man's part of obedience to God so that his sins can be taken away. Ananias, the preacher, said to Saul in Acts 22:16, "and now why tarriest thou arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins . . ."

Finally, there is **ONE GOD AND FATHER**. Christianity is a monotheistic religion. That is, it serves only one God. Paul in I Timothy 2:5 said, "There is one God . . ." This good reader, is God's plan for religious unity.

Now that you know about it will you not work with churches of Christ as we seek to teach and maintain it? Call the nearest church of Christ in your area for more information and for what you must do to become a part of the church of the New Testament.

The Sin Of Sectarianism

Jesus did not want his followers to be divided! John 17:20, 21 says, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they **MAY BE ONE**, Father as thou art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, **THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME.**"

Can any man sanction religious division after reading this prayer of Jesus? What is a sect? In religion:

- a. A party dissenting from an established or parent church.
- b. One of the organized bodies of Christians; a denomination.

The Greek word *hairesis* is found nine times in the New Testament and is always used in the bad sense. This is the word for sect! The word *hairesis* or sect is defined by the lexicons as "strictly, a choice or option; hence, a sect, faction; by implication discord and contention." The word *hairesis* is translated "sect" five times. It is translated "heresy" one time. This word is translated "heresies" three times.

As stated above this word is always applied to something sinful or wrong. Notice the uses of the word sect found in the Bible. Acts 5:17 says, "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with

The Sin of Sectarianism

indignation.” Their wrath was shown to the apostles as they saw to it that the apostles were placed in prison. Moses did not start this sect. Jesus did not belong to this sect.

In Acts 15:5 we read, “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” Again Moses did not start this sect. Jesus did not become a part of it. On the contrary, he rebuked severely those who made up these two sects! See Matthew 23.

In Acts 24:5 we read, “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect called the Nazarenes.” This statement was made by Tertullus against the great apostle Paul. In Acts 24:14 Paul says in his defense, “But this I confess unto thee that after the way that they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers . . .” Here again we see the word heresy or sect being used to describe enemies to the Roman and Jewish states. Paul in Acts 26:5 says, “. . . that after the straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.” Here again is a sect that Moses did not originate.

In Acts 28:22 the Jews say to Paul, “. . . for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.” The enemies of the church of Christ called it a sect. Paul said in I Corinthians 11:19, “For

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there must be damnable heresies (sects) among you . . .” Notice he says that heresy will damn those caught up in it. In Galatians 5:20 as Paul lists some works of the flesh that will keep men out of God’s eternal kingdom he lists “heresies.” Sects then are works of the flesh! Finally, II Peter 2:1 mentions, “damnable heresies.”

Thus, nowhere in the Bible is the word sect or heresy used to mean anything other than that which is sinful and wrong. Churches of Christ teach and plead for unity and not union. You can tie two cats together by the tail and have union but not unity! Will you reject sectarianism? Will you join with us in restoring first century Christianity to the twentieth century? The church of Christ is not a sect, it is not part of the church, rather it is the church!

Faith Only Salvation

What must I do to be saved is the most important question in all the world. Therefore it is important that the matter of “faith only salvation” be dealt with.

WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH. John 8:24 says, “Except a man believe that I am he, he shall die in his sins.” We all agree faith is needed in salvation. Yet James 2:24 says, “Ye see that by works a man is justified and **NOT ONLY BY FAITH.**”

In Acts, the book of conversions, the question, “what must I do to be saved” is asked three times (Acts 2:37; 9:6; 16:30). In their context we see faith, repentance, and baptism are all involved in salvation. Why can't we accept “faith only” salvation?

First, faith only would allow the devils to be saved. James 2:19 says, “. . . the demons also believe and shudder.”

Secondly, “faith only” does not save because the Bible lists other things that save. Grace saves (Romans 3:24). Obedience saves (Hebrews 5:9). Works saves (James 2:24). Baptism saves (I Peter 3:21). Hope saves (Romans 8:24). Confession saves (I John 4:2).

Thirdly, if faith only saves, it then follows that repentance does NOT save. But repentance does save. In Acts 11:18 we read, “. . . then to the Gentiles hath God granted repentance unto life.” The “faith” is something to be obeyed. Luke records in Acts 6:7, “. . . and

Faith Only Salvation

a great company of priests were made obedient to the faith.”

Finally, to be saved by obedient faith is not to say that we are saved by boastful works (Ephesians 2:8). There are works of the law and works of man's righteousness and there are works of God's righteousness. Repentance and baptism are works of God's righteousness. A man has not been saved because he has earned it when he is baptized. **FAITH, BUT NOT FAITH ONLY WILL SAVE YOU.** Faith only is like a body without a spirit (James 2:26).

Repentance Before Belief

There are those who tell us that men must repent and then believe in Christ to be saved. Let us look at the texts that they use and see what the Bible says.

First in Mark 1:15, “. . . repent ye and believe the gospel.” Jesus was preaching to Israelites in this text who had not lived in harmony with the law of Moses. They had sinned against God. They were already believers in God. No one would deny that. In this text they are commanded to turn from their sins and believe the gospel. The Christian age was to come shortly and they were to look forward to the establishment of the church. Remember they were already believers in God before they repented.

A second text used for this doctrine is Acts 20:21, “Testifying both to Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.” This does not say they were to repent before they believed. The order of mention is not always the order of the occurrence. Paul in Romans 10:10 said, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” In this instance confession would come before belief! This would be impossible.

Note, if you will, Paul’s statement in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the

Repentance Before Belief?

evidence of things not seen.” The word “substance” in this text means, “under, a basis, a foundation, dregs, sediment, or that which sinks to the bottom.” If faith then is the foundation on which our salvation rests, how can repentance precede it? Consider the statement of Paul in Romans 2:4, “. . . the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” The sending of Jesus is a demonstration of his goodness and it should lead us to repentance. But can it lead the man to repentance who does not believe? This would be impossible! Friends, consider these thoughts. In Luke 15:7 we read, “. . . there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth . . .” Consider with this verse, Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him . . .”

If repentance comes before faith and it is impossible to please God without faith, then the angels in (Luke 15:7) are rejoicing over one who is not pleasing to God! In James 2:19 we read, “. . . the demons also believe and shudder.” The demons believe in God. Yet, if repentance comes before belief, then we have devils who have repented! Surely, this cannot be! In II Corinthians 7:10 Paul said, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation . . .” If godly sorrow leads to repentance what leads to godly sorrow if not the belief that precedes it?

Finally, if you were trying to teach an atheist who does not believe in God where would you start? Would you start with repentance? Surely, you would not!

The Good Confession

Christians in the early centuries were often subjected to very cruel treatment because of their faith in Christ. Often Christians were thrown to the lions, burned at the stake, or had their heads chopped off rather than to deny the good confession they had made. Paul in I Timothy 6:12 said, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses." In verse thirteen Paul helps us to understand the confession a little more by saying, "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate, witnessed the good confession." We know from the gospel of John that Jesus confessed that he was a king who came into the world to bear witness to the truth. The good confession is to confess the fact that Jesus is King, the Son of God, and the Christ or the anointed of God. The good confession plays a major role in the church and in the lives of individual Christians.

First of all let us suggest some different ways that all men must confess Christ. We must confess him as God's Son. In Matthew 3:17 God said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Peter confessed in Matthew 16:16, ". . . thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Paul in Philippians 2:11 said, "and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

The Good Confession

to the glory of God the Father.” We should confess Christ as Saviour. Paul in Ephesians 5:23 said, “. . . being himself the Saviour of the body.” We must confess Christ as head of the church. In Colossians 1:18 we read, “And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church.”

In the second place let us consider the relation of the good confession to our salvation. In the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch we read in Acts 8:36-37, “See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip answered and said, if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest, and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Paul in Romans 10:9-10 said, “Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Note the fact that Paul links confession with salvation! For the erring child of God confession plays a major role in his restoration. His confession is not that Christ is the Son of God but a confession of sins. James 5:16 says, “Confess your faults one to another, pray one for another that ye may be healed, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” In I John 1:9 John says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Baptism And Salvation-Part I

So often we hear of people who say baptism has nothing to do with your salvation. They say we were saved and baptized at the end of the week or month. They say baptism is only an outward sign of an inward grace.

Is this the truth friends? What saith the scriptures? Your opinion or my opinion is not worth a nickle on this subject. Let the Bible speak! John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." These are the words of Jesus. Did any of the apostles ever preach this? Yes, Peter in Acts 2:38 said, ". . . repent and be baptized everyone of you for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 said, "For by one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body." Paul again in Titus 3:5 said, "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Note also Ephesians 5:25-26, ". . . even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." Remember also the words of Jesus who said in Mark 16:16, "He that

Baptism and Salvation - Part I

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

Ananias the preacher came to Saul in Damascus who was a believer and one who evidently had repented because of his fasting and praying and said in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Here was a man of faith yet in sin! Let us note also I Peter 3:21, “Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh”

Finally, examine Romans 6:3-6, 17-18, “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life, for if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be in bondage to sin.” Now note verses 16-17, “But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient to that form of doctrine whereunto ye were delivered, and being THEN made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” We can see from these verses baptism plays a part in our salvation. But how? you say. See the next chapter.

Baptism And Salvation-Part II

In our last chapter baptism and salvation were discussed. We cited such passages as John 3:5; Acts 2:38; and I Peter 3:21 to show that baptism plays an important part in our salvation. But how does baptism save? Is there any cleansing power in the water?

First of all let us note that the **BLOOD OF JESUS SAVES FROM SIN**. The vital question to ask now is, **HOW DO WE COME IN CONTACT WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?** In Romans 6:3 Paul said, "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH.**" Christ shed his blood in his death and we are baptized into his death! In Matthew 26:28 Jesus tells us **WHAT** takes away sin by saying, "this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many, unto the remission of sins." Peter in Acts 2:38 tells us **WHEN** sins are remitted by saying, "... repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS . . .**" Again, Revelation 1:5 tells us **WHAT** removes our sins. "... unto him that loves us and loosed us from our sins by his blood." Acts 22:16 tells us **WHEN** sins are forgiven. Ananias the preacher said to Saul, "And now why tarriest thou **ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED AND**

Baptism and Salvation - Part II

WASH AWAY THY SINS CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD."

Note I Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit were ye all **BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY.**" What is the one body? In Colossians 1:18, "He is head of the body the church." Baptism puts one into the church! Why must you be baptized into the one body? Because in Ephesians 5:23, ". . . being himself Saviour of the body." Jesus died for the one body, the church, and that means we had better be in this one body if we are to be saved. In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul said, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and behold all things become new." How do we get into Christ? Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as were **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST** did put on Christ." Churches of Christ have never advocated salvation by baptism alone without the preceding acts of belief, repentance, and confession! Can you justify the way baptism is taught in many religious circles today in light of the **BIBLE**?

Is Religious Division Right?

Does the Bible sanction religious division? Are the many denominations just branches of the one vine? What does the Bible say? Jesus in Matthew 12:25 said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every house divided against itself shall not stand." The church of Christ is God's house (I Timothy 3:15) and it is God's kingdom (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9). Jesus also prayed for the unity of his followers. In John 17:20, 21 we read, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word, that they 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." Jesus said that unity of professed believers is needed to cause the world to believe in him. What does the pagan who falls before an idol think as he looks at a divided Christian religion? Who is right? Whose church must he be a member of? Who will tell him what to do to be saved? "God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (I Corinthians 14:33).

Paul had a lot to say about unity. In I Corinthians 1:10 he said, "Now I beseech you brethren, through 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

Is Religious Division Right?

PERFECTED TOGETHER IN THE SAME MIND AND IN THE SAME JUDGMENT. In I Corinthians 4:17 Paul said, "For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, EVEN AS I TEACH EVERYWHERE IN EVERY CHURCH." Paul taught the same thing everywhere he went. Churches of Christ in first century times worshipped the same way everywhere. Paul could travel to Ephesus and to Corinth and there was no difference in their worship. There was no difference in their plans of salvation. There was no difference in their organization. They all were united in every way.

In closing note Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body (church, Colossians 1:18), one Spirit (Holy Spirit), even as ye are called in one hope (life eternal), one Lord (Jesus Christ), one faith (one system of belief that never changes – Jude 3; not many faiths as we hear today), one baptism (water baptism – John 3:23; immersion Romans 6:3-6; for remission of sins – Acts 2:38; 22:16), one God and Father of all who is over all, and through all, and in all (note the Bible teaching of the trinity, the three divine personalities of the Godhead)." The Bible teaches that religious division is wrong and that there is but one church. Men teach to the contrary. Who are you going to depend on?

The Authority Of The Scriptures

We all recognize that there is a need for a standard of authority in every realm of life. We have a ruler which is thirty-six inches long. This ruler is a standard authority in the realm of measurement. We have rules in a game that must be respected if the game is played right. We have rulers in government. If we had no law or lawmakers we would live in a jungle.

There must be a standard of authority in religion also. To whom shall we go for authority today? Some say go to the church. Many churches make their own creeds. Yet, in I Peter 2:5 we read, "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house . . ." Peter addressed these words to Christians. Christians are subject to error. Thus, the church cannot be our source of authority in religion today!

Some people use tradition for authority in religious matters. What is good enough for my family is good enough for me. Have you said that? Jesus said that the people of his day were, "making void the word of God by your tradition . . ." (Mark 7:13). Human traditions have absolutely no authority in Christianity!

Thirdly, some people turn to church councils for their authority in religion. Learned men hand down changes in church laws every so often and people receive them as though they came from God! Jesus in Matthew

The Authority of the Scriptures

15:9 said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Don't you know today that the commandments of men are contrary to the will of God?

Fourthly, many people turn to their own conscience as the authority. They rely on their feelings. Yet, Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, for it is not within man that walketh to direct his steps." Will man, the frail creature of God, depend on his own conscience or feelings for authority? A conscience is only a safe guide, when it is safely guided!

Well, where do we turn to for authority in religion today? We turn to Jesus! Jesus in Matthew 28:18 said, "All authority had been given to me in heaven and on earth." Matthew 17:5 records these words of the heavenly Father, ". . . this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Paul said of Jesus in Ephesians 1:22-23, "and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Christ in turn gave authority to his apostles. In Matthew 16:19 he said to Peter, "And I will give thee the keys to the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In Matthew 10:40 Jesus said to his apostles, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth also him that sent me."

The Authority of the Scriptures

There are a lot of people who could care less about what Paul said! All they are concerned with is what Jesus said. Yet, the scriptures are clear that when the apostles speak, Jesus speaks! The apostles of Christ have for the most part given us our Bible and for all men today the Bible becomes the only source of authority in religion. Will you allow the Bible to be your only guide in religion? Remember Jesus said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him, the words that I have spoken the same will judge him in the last day." Paul makes it clear that God's word will be the standard for judgment in Romans 2:16 when he says, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." Do you have book, chapter, and verse for everything you practice religiously? You had better have!

The Greatest Things In Life

In I Corinthians 13:13 Paul said, "And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love." Love, no doubt, is the greatest and most powerful principle in the world today. Love sacrifices, gives its best, lightens heavy burdens; it knows no limits. Let us now look on some other things worthy of consideration.

The greatest object in life is to glorify God. We must purposely glorify God in all that we say or do. In I Corinthians 10:31 Paul said, ". . . do all to the glory of God." Can you say that your life brings glory to God?

The greatest privilege in life is to become children of God. In I John 3:1 we read, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." Are you a child of God?

The greatest knowledge in this life will be about God and Christ. In John 17:3 Jesus said, "And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." You may have a college education and think you are really intelligent, but without a knowledge of Christ you are not an educated person! Do you know God and Christ?

The greatest vocation in life is to work for Christ. Paul, in Ephesians 4:1 said, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of your

The Greatest Things In Life

vocation wherewith ye are called.” Christianity is described here as a vocation or full time job. This is true as far as faithful Christians are concerned! Is Christianity a full or part time job for you?

The greatest work in the world is that of winning souls. In Proverbs 11:30 Solomon said, “He that is wise winneth souls.” Jesus in Luke 19:10 said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” The church which is the spiritual body of the Lord must continue the work of our Lord who reached out for the souls of men in his physical body.

The greatest loss in the world is to lose one’s soul. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus said, “For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” I don’t care who you are or what you have or what has been accomplished in this life. If you lose your soul friends, you have lost it all!

Finally, the greatest prize to be sought after in this life is eternal life. In I Timothy 6:12 Paul said, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life . . .” What kind of prize are you seeking in this life, good friend?

What Is Your Life?

In James 4:14 we read, “. . . for what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.” All of us are interested in life as used in the above verse. The word life refers to one’s existence and this lesson will deal with that existence and what one should do with it. Certainly viewed from the standpoint of time, life is so brief. In Job 14:1 we read, “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” Jesus said of life in Luke 12:15, “. . . beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.” Let us now look at what a man’s life should consist of according to the Bible.

First, there should be a proper objective or goal in life. The Lord had a goal as he came to earth and lived among men. In Luke 19:10 he said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” The apostle Paul had a goal in his life. In Philippians 3:14 he said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Someone once wrote, “Half the wrecks upon life’s ocean, if some star had been their guide, would have safely reached the harbour, but they drifted with the tide.” Too many go through life without a compass or a chart. They have little knowledge of where they have been or where they are or where they

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are going. We must not be content to drift along with the tide.

Secondly, we might ask what our goals must be. The one overruling goal of life should be the desire to spend eternity in heaven. We must remember that we are only on earth for a short period of time. Heaven is certainly going to be far more than we realize. But it is not enough to talk about, sing about, and to read about heaven! We must strive to enter in. Jesus said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in the strait gate, for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able!" Now to reach this primary goal we must set other goals to help us reach it. One of the secondary goals must be the spirit of perseverance. Again Jesus said in Luke 9:62, ". . . no man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven." There is no time to look back. We must always be progressing. Yet, too many want to sit back and base their salvation on what they have done in the past rather than what they are doing now! The only way to succeed is to stay on the job. It is one thing to start something and it is another thing to finish it. There are many goals that men may have that are out of reach, but the goal of eternal life is not!

One other secondary goal that will help us in reaching heaven is that of always having an optimistic attitude towards life that always takes advantage of opportunities. Philip Bail said, "It matters not how long we live

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but how well.” Benjamin Franklin said, “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.” Omar Iban said, “Four things do not come back, the spoken word; the sped arrow; time past; and neglected opportunity.” Paul said in Ephesians 5:15, 16, “See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Yes, time and opportunities are precious and we must use them well if we shall reach heaven.

What kind of life do you have? Are you like a ship without a compass? If so, set your course based on the Bible and let Jesus be the captain of your salvation. Let him guide you safely into the harbour of heaven.

So You Love Your Children

Most parents who read this article will say that they love their children. But what do they mean when they use the word love? It is used to mean that they provide for their physical existence. They give them a home, food, and clothing. Perhaps even a few extras. But the truth is that parents give their children today everything except what they really need. What are some things not given by parents which tell the way they really love their children?

First of all most parents do not give themselves to their children. Our youth today cry out, "our parents are too busy for us." And between their job and community life, the average American father spends seven and one-half minutes alone with his children per week! One rich boy said to his father, "but I don't want your money, I want you!" Another man said, "my father never left me much but he always took me with him wherever he went!" The truth is that too many kids have enough of the physical needs, but they are starving mentally for that which only you can give them! Paul in Ephesians 6:4 says to fathers, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and in the admonition of the Lord." To women Paul wrote to Titus these words in Titus 2:4-5, "that they may train the younger women to love their

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husbands, to love their children . . . workers at home . . . that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Most homes today are little more than filling stations and motels. No one has any time for each other. We need more parents like Abraham of whom it was said by God in Genesis 18:19, “For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah.” Juvenile delinquency which plagues this country is caused by parental delinquency! We wonder why kids are turning to marijuana and LSD. When children cannot turn to their parents they will turn to something else. We cannot violate God’s plan for the home without reaping the whirlwind.

Saving Our Children

Saving our children means saving them from Satan and for Christ, from death and for life, from hell and for heaven. The greatest tragedy in the life of any parent should be the death of a child that is not a Christian. Yet, many youth today are saying that there is no need of religion in their lives. Many parents have asked the question of David found in II Samuel 18:29, “. . . is it well with the young man Absalom?” But they have asked it too late! Parents must realize that there are some things that must be done right the first time, for we will not have a second chance. This is the case in raising our children! We had better train them well now while we have the opportunity or reap the heartaches in the years that lie ahead. Let us now look at some ways that will help us to save our children.

First, there must be church-home cooperation. The Bible is quite clear on the fact that the home has and should be a center of religious teaching. In Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 we read, “And these words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house” The fact is today that the home is in serious trouble. It needs the church and the church needs the home. Yet the home complains that much of the preaching and teaching done in the church is ineffective. On

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the other hand, the church complains because of the home's indifference, failure to teach the Bible, failure to teach their children to love the Lord and his church, and lack of support on moral issues. There has been the misunderstanding of the church's responsibility to save our children. Yet, children are in the home 45 times more than they are in church for instruction in the Bible. Fathers had better read Ephesians 6:4, "and ye fathers . . . bring them up in the nurture and in the admonition of the Lord." Mothers need to meditate on Titus 2:4, "that they may train the younger women to love their husbands and to love their children." There has also been a misunderstanding on many moral issues. Many parents won't work with and back up the church's stand on these issues. The home and the church must cooperate or lose many of our young people.

In the second place, how can the church and home cooperate? The home can teach children the needs of getting involved. Paul in Ephesians 2:10 said, we are ". . . created in Christ Jesus for good works . . ." There must be family worship in the home. Parents must be slow to criticize the church before the children. Parents can see that Bible school lessons are studied and that their children see in their parent's lives that Christ is first! The church should try to involve every family in the work of the Lord. They should train teachers and use their young people as much as possible. There should also be periods of fellowship on a regular basis.

Saving Our Children

The truth is, friends, that our children are won or lost largely in the home. Parents, you don't have to be wicked to lose your children. Just neglect them and set a bad example and one day you and your children will look each other in the face in hell!

Why I Study The Bible

Have you ever asked yourself, why do I study the Bible? There are a number of reasons why you should study your Bible. I want to tell you mine.

I study the Bible first of all that I might establish and increase my faith. Paul in Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Faith grows when our contact with God's word grows!

Secondly, I study the Bible to be able to give a reason for my faith. In I Peter 3:15 we read, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready to give an answer (defense) to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." We too will be destroyed spiritually if we are not able to defend the truth!

Thirdly, I study that I might be able to teach others. Paul in II Timothy 2:2 said, "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Christianity is a teaching religion and if we do not teach we do not practice Christianity! Someone has said that we cannot teach what we do not know and we cannot lead where we will not go!

In the fourth place, I study the Bible in order to

Why I Study The Bible

keep sin out of my life. In Psalm 119:11 David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." We need to be like Jesus, who when tempted of the Devil said, thus it is written!

In the fifth place, I study the Bible because God does not overlook ignorance. In Acts 17:30 Paul said, "And the times of ignorance God once overlooked but now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." We are living in a land that affords the greatest opportunity in all of Christian history to grasp the truths of God's word. How are we using our opportunities?

Finally, I study God's word because God commands it. In II Timothy 2:15 Paul said, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

When God commands anything, we do not have a choice, we must obey! Why do you study the Bible? Or do you?

Blessings In Christ

Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ."

Note the fact that **ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ARE IN CHRIST**. **SALVATION** is in Christ. II Timothy 2:10 says, "Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may also obtain salvation which is in Christ Jesus."

FORGIVENESS is in Christ. In Ephesians 1:7 Paul said, "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace." There is **NO CONDEMNATION** in Christ. Romans 8:1 says, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ."

The **DEAD ARE BLESSED** who die in Christ. Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . ." Finally, the Bible says that **ETERNAL LIFE** is in Christ. John said in I John 5:11, "And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and the life is in his Son."

These are just a few of the blessings that could be listed. **NOTE THE FACT THAT YOU MUST BE IN CHRIST TO RECEIVE ANY OF THESE BLESSINGS**. Thus, the question arises, **HOW DO WE GET INTO CHRIST?** In Romans 10:10 Paul said, "For with the heart man believeth **UNTO** righteousness . . ." In Acts

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11:18 Peter said, “. . . then to the Gentiles hath God granted repentance UNTO life.” Again in Romans 10:10 Paul said, “. . . for with the mouth confession is made UNTO salvation.” Note now Romans 6:3, “Or are ye ignorant that all we who WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST . . .” Notice we are baptized INTO Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, “For as many of you as WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST did put on Christ.” Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 said, “For by one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body.” Notice baptism puts one into Christ and into the one body or the church.

Thus, to be in Christ is to be in his church and to be in his church is to be in Christ where all spiritual blessings are. Are you in Christ? Do you have access to all spiritual blessings? Will you not render obedience to God's will by being baptized into Christ?

God's Valuable Word-Part I

Is God's word valuable? Jesus said God's word was valuable in Matthew 4:4 when he said, "Thus it is written, men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Jesus also said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him, the word that I spake, the same will judge him in the last day."

Paul taught the value of God's word in II Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Now let us observe some ways that God's word is valuable for all men. God's word saves us. Paul in I Corinthians 1:18 said, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but unto us who are saved it is the power of God."

Secondly, God's word nourishes our souls (Luke 4:4). In I Timothy 4:6 we find that this young evangelist was to be, ". . . nourished in the words of the faith."

In the third place, observe the fact that God's word sanctifies us. Speaking of the church the apostle Paul in

God's Valuable Word - Part I

Ephesians 5:26 said, "that he might sanctify it through the washing of water with the word."

God's word then has the power to set us apart, to dedicate us to a life of holy service unto our God.

Fourthly, note the fact that only when we live by God's word will our prayers be answered. Some people wonder why God never answers their prayers. Jesus, in John 15:7 said, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you." When we feed our soul with God's word and when we make our judgments and decisions by God's word our prayer life will have some power and meaning!

Finally, God's word guides us. David in Psalm 119:105 said, "thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Speaking of God's word, Peter in II Peter 1:3 said, "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness . . ." All that man needs in this life is found in God's word! The value of God's word ought to impress on us the need for regular Bible study in the home.

God's Valuable Word-Part II

The last chapter suggested that God's word was valuable because it saves us (I Corinthians 1:18); it nourishes our souls (Luke 4:4); it sanctifies us (Ephesians 5:16); it guides us (Psalm 119:105); it will answer our prayers if we live it (John 15:7).

God's word is also valuable in the first place because it provides us with the assurance of our salvation. In I John 2:3 John said, "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Plainly in this verse is the idea that the assurance of our salvation is conditional. We must keep God's commandments.

Secondly, God's word is valuable because it can provide the Christian a daily victory over sin. In Psalm 119:9 David said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." God's word can keep us clean. In the temptations of Christ, our Lord answered the Devil with God's word. When the Devil tempted Christ to turn stones into bread, Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "thus it is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

In the third place, the value of God's word is seen in the fact that it can help our faith to grow. Jesus, in

God's Valuable Word - Part II

Luke 11:22 said, “. . . have faith in God.” Paul in Hebrews 11:6 said, “For without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him . . .”

We all certainly see the need for faith. Paul says in Romans 10:17, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Faith and God's word are linked together in such a way that you can't have one without the other! If you want your faith to grow then your study of God's word must increase!

Finally, God's word is valuable because it provides a true source of joy and peace. In Psalm 1:2 David speaking about the happy man said, “But his delight is in the law of Jehovah and on his law doth he meditate both day and night.” In Psalm 119:111 David again said, “thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” Again in Psalm 119:165 we read, “Great peace have they that love thy law.” The value of God's word should encourage all of us to use it diligently in this life.

Three Ways To Die

Death is a word that seems unreal when applied to ourselves. Yet, it is a force in this world that all men must face. The Bible makes it plain that there are three ways to die.

First, all men must die physically. Physical death defined from a scriptural standpoint is the separation of the spirit from the body. James 2:26 says, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." Paul said in Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." Paul in II Corinthians 4:16 said, "... our outward man is decaying ..."

Thus, even while we live, we are all dying physically! This fact ought to make all of us aware of just how helpless and hopeless we are without God. Let it be known, though, that the Christian is not afraid of physical death! Why? Christians are not afraid of physical death because they have died to sin!

This is the second way that men can die. We must all be aware that sin separates men from God and brings death to our souls. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Paul in Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death ..."

Three Ways To Die

In spite of all this, God sent his Son that we might have a chance to die unto sin. I Peter 2:24 says, "who his ownself bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness." How do we die to sin? We die to sins when we obey the gospel of Christ. The examples of Bible conversion have been given unto all men as patterns to follow in the book of Acts.

Finally, there is spiritual death. Spiritual death is a conscious separation from God. Spiritual death is described in many ways in the Bible. Jesus in Matthew 10:28 said, "Fear not him who is able to kill the body, but rather, fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed into the eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels." In II Thessalonians 1:9 spiritual death is pictured in this way, "Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

Now reader, how many times will you die? All men must die once. Some will die twice (physically and to sin, or physically and spiritually) some men even die three times. They will die physically, to sin, and then spiritually because they have failed to live the Christian life.

Worship Objectives

Let us begin this lesson by defining the title. The word “worship” comes from the Hebrew word *shahah* meaning, “to bow down, to prostrate, and reverence that leads to service and obedience.” The Greek word used most in the New Testament is the word *proskuneo*, which means, “to kiss the hand or the ground, an act of reverence.” The English word “worship” is Anglo-Saxon in its origin and originally meant “worthship.”

Perhaps the best scriptural definition of worship is found in Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is your spiritual service,” (or worship according to some translations).

To sum up these definitions we can say that worship is not only something that can be confined to just the Lord’s day but it can also be extended to our everyday living when we continually manifest reverence and respect for God in our conduct. The word “objectives” in this title has reference to goals, purposes and reasons for worship. Are we just to worship God and let it happen? Or should we try to accomplish various objectives when we assemble to worship?

There are five objectives that we should seek to accomplish when we worship God. First, we must strive in worship to do the will of God. God’s will is that we worship him! Jesus said in John 4:23-24, “For the hour

Worship Objectives

cometh, and now is, when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. For God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Notice the fact that God seeks men to worship him.

Secondly, we should desire to learn more of God's will in worship. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, "... learn of me . . ." God has designed our worship on the Lord's day to provide a time to learn God's will. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart unto the Lord." Thus our song service becomes a teaching service.

Then again, there is the preaching that characterizes our worship. In Troas, we find the early Christians meeting and Luke records in Acts 20:7, "Upon the first day of the week when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow, and prolonged his speech until midnight."

Thirdly, we should seek to commune with God in worship. We should desire to enter into the presence of Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We talk to God in prayer. God talks to us in the study and proclamation of his word.

Worship Objectives

We need this communion for Jesus said in Luke 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Fourthly, worship can serve as a period that can be used to restore our soul. David in Psalm 23:3 said of God, “He restoreth my soul . . .” James 5:16 says, “Confess your faults one to another, pray for one another, that ye may be healed, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” We can do this when we are assembled to worship God. We can come to God with repentance and confession and walk out being cleansed and refreshed in the spirit.

Finally, we should seek to praise the God of our salvation. Paul in Ephesians 3:21 said, “Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations, forever and forever, amen.” Do you consciously try to achieve these objectives in your worship?

Must We Accept Evolution?

A few years ago a manifesto was distributed by a geneticist, H. J. Muller, which was signed by 177 American biologists, asserting that the organic evolution of all living things, man included, from primitive forms of life and even ultimately from non-living materials, is an established fact of science!

We must realize that many movements of the present day which oppose Biblical Christianity have based their claims for validity on the supposed historical fact of the evolutionary struggle and progress. This is especially true with Communism, Nazism, and for the amoral psychologies of behaviorism and Freudianism, and for the religious philosophies of existentialism and the death of God movement.

Basically there are two main categories into which the theories of evolution fall. First, atheistic evolution and secondly, theistic evolution. This lesson will deal first with atheistic evolution.

First, let's begin by defining our terms. The term, "atheistic", is used to describe those who do not believe in the existence of a divine being or God. "Evolution" as used in this lesson means that, "all forms of life on earth today came from one or a few primitive forms of life by a connected series of changes, which at every point were only natural. This doctrine demands that there be no mind behind the universe and no power active

Must We Accept Evolution?

in the history of life other than that which is purely mechanical and which is inherent in nature.” In other words, God had no hand in the creation of life. Life happened accidentally! We cannot accept this doctrine for the following reasons.

First, this doctrine assumes there is no God. David in Psalm 14:1 said, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God.” Both nature and the supernatural character of the Bible prove the existence of God.

Secondly, we would have to believe that life came from non-life!

Thirdly, we would have to believe that which is conscious came from that which had no consciousness.

Fourthly, we would accept that intelligence came from non-intelligence!

Fifthly, there is an immense moral problem to solve. If evolution is true it would be no worse to kill a man than a grasshopper!

Sixth, there is the law of entropy which says that everything is running down. The evolutionist says that everything is progressing to a higher and a better state!

In the seventh place, there is the mathematical chance of life accidentally coming into being are ten to 420,000,000,000 power to one!

Eighth, we would have to believe that matter is eternal!

Ninth, evolution violates the well proven Law of Energy Conservation which says energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transformed!

Must We Accept Evolution?

In the tenth place, evolution makes man an animal, a robot not accountable to anyone or anything, but the physical stimuli about us. Treat a man like an animal and he will act like one!

These are just a few of the reasons that we cannot accept evolution. Let us affirm in our times the wonderful truth, "And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). "Let God be found true and every man a liar..." (Romans 3:4). We must never accept evolution in any form and we don't have to.

God's Cowboy

Amos 1:1 gives us the prophet's occupation. "The words of Amos who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa . . ." Amos would have been what we could term today a cowboy. He also was a great prophet for God who had a lot to say to the people of his day and to the people of the twentieth century. Let's note some great lessons from Amos.

First, Amos lashes out at the sin of injustice. Amos 2:6 says, "Because they have sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes." In Amos 5:12 we read, ". . . ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate from their right." Notice God's call to these people in Amos 5:24, "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." God's attitude towards injustice has not changed. Jesus in Matthew 22:39 said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Secondly, Amos rebuked his people for materialism or worldliness. Amos 6:1 says, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion . . ." Amos 6:4 says, "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches . . ." Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, ". . . ye cannot serve God and mammon (riches)." Paul in I Timothy 6:7-8 said, "For we brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out, but having food and covering we shall be therewith content."

God's Cowboy

Thirdly, Amos speaks out against vain worship. Amos 5:21 says, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies."

Why did God turn away from their worship? **WORSHIP MEANS NOTHING WHEN THE LIFE OF THE WORSHIPPER IS NOT IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL!** Many who worship God have their worship rejected by God, because their lives are inconsistent with his will! People who think they can lie and cheat during the week and worship God acceptably on the Lord's day are in for a surprise on the day of judgment!

Finally, Amos taught that privilege brings with it responsibility! Amos 3:2 says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities." They enjoyed special privileges which brought special responsibilities. Christians today are in the same position. In Luke 12:45 Jesus said, "And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required . . ." Let us close by saying with Amos in Amos 4:12, "... prepare to meet thy God . . ."

What Do Ye More Than Others?

In Matthew 5:47 Jesus asks a very soul searching question, “. . . what do ye more than others? . . .” Jesus indicates here that he is not satisfied with Christians just being religious! Reader, what do ye more than others?

First of all, what do you love more than others? Do you love God more than others? In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said, “. . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.” Do you? Do you love Christ’s church more than others? In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . .” Do you? Do you love the Bible more than others? In Psalm 119:47 we read, “And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.” Do you love your neighbor more than others? In Matthew 22:39 Jesus said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

In the second place, do you labor for Christ more than others? Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Paul said in Titus 3:1, “. . . be ready unto every good work.” Are you?

Thirdly, do we suffer for Christ more than others? In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow

What Do Ye More Than Others?

me.” There must be denial of self if we are to follow Christ. The early Christians were often persecuted. In Acts 5:41 we read this of those who were persecuted, “They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.” Would we rejoice if we had to suffer for Christ or would we complain?

What do ye more than others?

God Will Repay

In Hebrews 10:30 Paul said, “. . . vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense saith the Lord . . .”

God will see to it that in this life and in the life to come, that we get back what we have put into life. For our first consideration think of the fact that we will reap exactly what we have been sowing! Galatians 6: 7-8, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life.”

Everyone is sowing something and everyone shall reap the consequences, if in this life their interests have been primarily fleshly in their nature!

Secondly, we will receive exactly as we have given. In II Corinthians 9:6 Paul said, “But I say unto you, he that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” You never truly possess anything in this life until you use it for others! You can only lose what you have by hoarding it up for yourselves.

Thirdly, you will be judged exactly as you have judged others. Jesus in Matthew 7:1-2 said, “Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it

God Will Repay

shall be measured unto you again.” Jesus also said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7). James 2:13 warns, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that showeth no mercy . . .”

Finally, Christ will treat us one day, exactly as we have treated him in this life. In Matthew 10:32 Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him also shall I confess before my Father which is in heaven.” In the next verse Christ says, “And whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Some day you will stand before the great paymaster to receive from the storehouse of heaven what you have put into it in this life. What will you receive?

Who Represented You At The Crucifixion

A reading of Matthew, chapter twenty-seven, will convey to the reader that there were a number of different types of people around the cross. We have all heard the song that asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" In a very real sense of the word we were all there in that we were represented by the different kinds of people present on Golgatha. Human nature has not changed all these years. Thus, people in our very present disposition and relationship to Christ were there. Let us now look at some of the characters that surrounded the cross and see if you can see yourself.

Could it be that you were represented by Judas? Judas betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. There are many Judases in and out of Christ's church. These people are betraying the Lord for the almighty dollar. In I Timothy 6:10 Paul said, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the truth and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." This is the reason Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21 that men should not lay up for themselves treasures on the earth!

Or were you represented by the disciples and especially Peter? Following the betrayal of Jesus in the garden we read of the disciples in Matthew 26:56, ". . . then all the disciples forsook him and fled." In verse 58

Who Represented You At The Crucifixion?

of this same chapter it was said of Peter that he followed afar off. There are legions of people today who have fled Jesus when Christianity got a little too demanding. Many are not willing to make the sacrifices needed but yet, they, like Peter, are still trying to follow Jesus afar off by their token service.

Many are represented by the Roman soldiers. In John 19:23 we read, "The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat . . ." In verse 24 of this same chapter we read that they cast lots for his garments. These represent the millions who are indifferent to religion. These people have no interest in their souls. Many Christians, by living lives not in harmony with Christ, are no better than the Roman soldiers. For in Hebrews 6:6 we read that it is possible for one to ". . . crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame."

Yet, many people are represented by the Centurion. After seeing the miraculous events that surrounded the crucifixion of Jesus he said in Matthew 27:54, ". . . truly this was the Son of God." Many today will make that same confession but many today will not do anything about it like the Centurion.

It is my hope that you were represented by the godly women and the apostle John and others who stayed with Jesus all the way to the cross. These represent those who will put Jesus first in their lives. What about you?

Who Represented You At The Crucifixion?

Does Christ have first place in your life? Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters. For he will either hate the one and love the other or he will hold to one and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Yes, all of us were there. Who represented you?

Remember The Poor

Long before the New Testament church built a building, they took a collection for the poor and needy. A good example was the collection taken for the poor saints in Judea.

A famine swept that part of the world a few years after the establishment of the church. We read in Acts 11:28-29, "And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judea."

Most religious groups do little in the way of helping the poor. If this is not true, then why have federal aid, social security, welfare, and civic clubs taken over the work of the church? We give the government the glory for its help rather than the great God of heaven! The Bible has always placed a great emphasis on helping the poor.

First, note the Old Testament emphasis. In Psalm 82:3 we read, ". . . defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the needy." These words form a plea by Asaph unto God. In Psalm 9:12 David said of God, "He forgetteth not the cry of the poor." In Proverbs 28:27 we find, "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack . . ." Isaiah 25:4 says of God, "Thou hast been a

Remember The Poor

stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress . . .”

Secondly, observe the emphasis of the New Testament on helping the poor. In Matthew 19:21, “. . . go and sell that which thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven . . .” These words were spoken to a man who sought eternal life. James 1:27 tells us what pure religion is when James says, “Pure religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” We must care for widows and orphans!

In the third place, why must we help the poor? Proverbs 19:17 says, “He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord . . .” In the great judgment scene in Matthew 25, we find Jesus telling the saved why they will enter into heaven in these words recorded in Matthew 25:35-36, “For I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.” The righteous asked the Lord when they had done all of this to the Lord and he answered in Matthew 25:40, “. . . inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” If we are to help the poor then some church folk are going to have to get down off their high-horse and they are going to have to throw away their “I am holier than thou” attitudes that have kept them

Remember The Poor

from ever really rubbing elbows with the poor. You can't feed a man on the gospel while his stomach is empty!

Is It I?

In Matthew 26:20-22 we read, "Now when even was come, he was sitting at meat with the twelve disciples; and as they were eating, he said, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me, and they were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto everyone, is it I?" In verse 25 we read, "Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, is it I, Rabbi? He said unto him, Thou hast said."

As we think of our relationship to Christ, we too must ask the question, is it I? First, we should ask, is it I who has been blessed? Judas was blessed by being in the presence of Jesus for three years, but he failed to show his gratitude. God has blessed all who read these lines in so many ways. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights . . ." We have God's love. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . ."

We can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace."

Americans are richer than 95% of the world's population! Yet, with all these blessings many of us have turned into those who would betray Christ.

Secondly, is it I who has betrayed my Lord by sins of commission? The sin of commission is a sin which

Is It I?

is committed or done through action. In I John 3:4, “. . . sin is the transgression of the law.”

Is it I, should be asked in connection with drunkenness. Ephesians 5:18 Paul said, “Be not drunk with wine . . .” Is it I who should have been moral rather than immoral? Galatians 5:19 Paul says, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness . . .” (KJV).

The first four sins listed by Paul here are sins of immorality. In verse 21 of this chapter Paul says, “. . . they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Is it I who takes God’s name in vain? Exodus 26:7, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain . . .”

Do I betray Christ by committing the sin of gossip? Is it I? Jesus in Matthew 12:36 said, “And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof . . .” Gossip is taking man’s name in vain!

Is it I who fails to discern the Lord’s body in communion? In I Corinthians 11:29 Paul said, “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” When we fail to let our minds go back to the cross and fail to remember that Jesus died, arose from the dead, and is coming again, we have failed to discern the Lord’s body and we have partaken of the supper in an unworthily manner! Am I playing the role of Judas? Is it I?

How Do You View The Cross?

The preaching of the cross was the center of first century preaching. In I Corinthians 2:2 Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Yet, throughout the centuries men have viewed the cross in one of two ways. These views are given by Paul in I Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but to us who are saved it is the power of God." Also Paul stated in I Corinthians 1:23-24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are saved both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Thus, we see that some men view the cross as foolishness! They allow the cross to become a stumbling block. Others view the cross as the power of God to save their souls. Let us now examine these two views of the cross.

First of all, those who are in the process of being lost view the cross as foolishness which means silly or stupid in verse 18 quoted above. Yet, on the road to hell there stands the cross as a stumbling block. If you go to hell it is going to be because you have made a decision to reject God's love! Remember we decide every day that we live whether the cross will be a stumbling block or a stepping stone in our life. Jesus said,

How Do You View The Cross?

“He that is not with me is against me . . .” (Matthew 12:30).

In the second place, the cross should be viewed as the power of God to save our souls. There is power in the cross. In John 12:32 Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.” We should be drawn to the cross by God’s love. Paul in Romans 5:8 said, “For God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet still sinners Christ died for us.” Christ’s willingness to suffer the agonies of the cross should draw us. In John 10:18 he said, “No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself . . .” Certainly all men should be drawn to the cross because of its saving power. Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation . . .” Remember the cross of Christ also stands on the road to heaven. If you reach heaven it will be only because you have confronted the cross and made a decision about its place in your life.

All men in this life make a decision about the cross. All men hold to one of the two views discussed. What kind of a decision have you made? What is your view of the cross?

Loving What Jesus Loved

In John 21:15-17 we read of a very soul searching conversation between Peter and Jesus. In this discussion Jesus questions the love that Peter has for him. He asks Peter to confess his love for every time Peter denied his Lord. I think also that in this conversation he is telling Peter that if he loves the Lord, he will love the things that Jesus loved! Proof of the fact that Peter did love the things that Jesus loved is seen on Pentecost when Peter lifted up Jesus before the multitudes of people in Jerusalem, who for the first time heard the gospel preached. It is seen in his imprisonment in Acts 12. If historians are correct, it is seen in the fact that Peter was crucified head downward. I read of a couple who kept their little boy's red wagon. They loved it because he loved it. The same ought to be true with Christians today! We must love the things that Jesus loved. What were and are some of the things that Jesus loved?

First, Jesus loved his heavenly Father. In giving a young lawyer the greatest commandment of the law he said in Matthew 22:37, “. . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” This means that we must love the Father with all our emotions, spirit, and intellect! James said in chapter 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights with whom there

Loving What Jesus Loved

is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Thus, everything that we have that is good in this life comes from our heavenly Father. In Ephesians 1:3 Paul said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ.” Here we see that all our spiritual blessings come from our heavenly Father. Seeing that all of these things are so, ought not we, the recipients of these blessings, to love our Father with all that we have?

Secondly, Jesus loved the words of his Father. In John 17:8 he said, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they received them . . .” If we love the words of our Father we will hear them. Paul said in Romans 10:17, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

In the third place, Jesus loved prayer. He was a man of prayer. His life and his teachings taught the necessity of prayer. In Luke 18:1, he said that we ought always to pray. What would you think of a child that never, never talked to his father? God loves to hear from his children.

In the fourth place, Jesus loved his church. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul said, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” If you love Christ’s church you will be faithful in attendance as it gathers on the first day of the week. You will also be a faithful servant for it and will give liberally of your means to it.

Loving What Jesus Loved

Fifth, and last, Jesus loved the souls of men and so should we. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost.” He loved the souls of men because they are made in the image of God as stated in Genesis 1:27. He loved them because as he said in Matthew 16:26, “they are more valuable than all the world.” If we love the souls of men, if we love our neighbors as ourselves, then we will bring them to Jesus. Do you love Jesus?

The Insanity Of Sin

Ridicule is the universal attitude towards sin today. Mental illness, emotional need, social wrong and other such conditions are offered as the only meanings of sin! The Bible, though, declares that sin is universal. In Romans 3:23 Paul said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Bible is also plain in declaring that behind all wars, crime, strife, and heartache is sin! In Luke 15:11-24 we read of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son which beyond any doubt shows the insanity of sin! Note the steps that made him a prodigal and the insanity of sin.

First, the son made a total break with home and his father. He broke away from all restraining influence. Adam and Eve broke away from their home in the garden and from their heavenly Father. We are all aware of the results of their tragic mistake. Man always separates himself from God. In Isaiah 59:1, 2 Isaiah said: "For the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you." Many Christians have left their spiritual home and Father. How insane to leave God's watch and care that we all so desperately need!

Secondly, the boy misused his father's inheritance. The same is true with Christians today. Too many are

The Insanity of Sin

wasting the time, talents, and influence given to them from their heavenly Father. The one talent man in Matthew 25:14-30 who misused his money was cast into outer darkness. The rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21 didn't use his blessings for God. As a result he lost his soul. If what God has blessed us with in this life is not used for God it is wasted!

Thirdly, the prodigal son was totally unprepared for trouble. He had lived high. He had never known hard times. Many people today living in sin are living high, as they see it. But hard times come to all. The prodigal son left home for an irresponsible life and had no defense for Satan. This is true with many Christians today. They have left God and are easy prey for the Devil. We buy insurance to protect us from everything but we are not concerned about insuring that our souls are saved. How insane it is for men not to be right in the sight of God!

Fourthly, in Luke 15:16 we read, "And he would have filled his belly with the husk that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him." This was the low point in his departure. He was willing to wallow with the pigs. Sin looks beautiful and alluring far away but once entangled in it's web, it is ugly and filthy. James said in James 4:4, "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is the enemy of God, whosoever would be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." It is insane for men to allow themselves to become God's enemies!

The Insanity of Sin

Fifth, we learn from this parable that sin does not have to destroy your soul. The prodigal son started thinking again and came back to his home and father in true repentance. You, as one who needs to come back to God, can and must! Your heavenly Father stands with his arms wide open ready to receive you and deliver you from the insanity of sin.

Are You Cheating?

Webster's dictionary defines cheating as, "deceiving, tricking, lying, and playing the imposter."

Cheating is more than common in our world today. It manifests itself in many ways. Let us now observe some ways in which people cheat.

First of all, young people often cheat in school. One man who had been out of college for a number of years finally brought his degree back to the college and told the President he did not earn it and his conscience would not allow him to keep it. Thus the person who gets hurt by cheating in school is the cheater! In Revelation 21:8 John said, ". . . and all liars (cheaters) shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

Secondly, young people can cheat their parents by failing to honor and respect them. In Ephesians 6:2 Paul said, "Honor thy father and thy mother . . ."

Sometimes young people will reap in their own children the kind of respect shown to their parents while they were young. Note Galatians 6:7, ". . . for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Parents, in the third place, often cheat their children. Parents, do you know that these precious children are given to you as a steward? You are responsible for not only their physical welfare but also to see that their souls are taken care of! Ephesians 6:4

Are You Cheating?

says, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." **MOST FATHERS DON'T EVEN KNOW THIS VERSE IS IN THE BIBLE!**

Ladies, do you know about Titus 2:4-5, which says, "That they may train the younger women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be soberminded, chaste workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

We cheat our children when we fail to give them the spiritual training we should. Hell will be hell for many parents, because their children will be there with them!

Sad to say, in the fourth place, some parents cheat on one another! The Bible calls this adultery. Adultery takes two forms. First there is mental adultery. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus said, "But I say unto you that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The second type of adultery consists of the actual physical act. Paul in Hebrews 13:4 said, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

Finally, man often tries to cheat God! But God is not to be deceived by mortal man. God knows how we work and worship for him. In Proverbs 15:3 we read, "For the eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good." Those who cheat, cheat themselves!

The Sin Of Doing Nothing

Every day that we live, God provides opportunities to enable us to lead men to Christ. Often though, if the opportunities are not used, they may never return. Certainly the greatest mistake we can make is to do nothing for Christ in this life. This is a real spiritual danger and is present in the lives of too many today.

Jesus tells of the one talent man in Matthew 25: 14-30. His master had given him one talent, which is a piece of money worth over \$900.00. The other servants used their money for the benefit of the master, but the one talent man buried his and failed to increase it. The master returned and found that the one talent man had not increased his money and said in Matthew 25:30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This man didn't spend it on gambling, liquor, or throw it away. He was simply guilty of doing nothing with what his master had given him. The lesson should be clear to us. God has given us all that we have. We must use our possessions to the benefit of our Master, Jesus Christ. Some day he is coming again and will ask us to give an account of ourselves and that which he has blessed us with!

We read in Luke 13:6-9 the parable of the barren fig tree. The parable tells of a man coming to his fig tree for fruit but finding none. He told his servant to work

The Sin of Doing Nothing

with it a little longer but if it didn't bear fruit the servant was to cut it down. This tree was not to be cut down because it produced wormy fruit. It was to be cut down because it didn't produce any fruit at all! The lesson is that we will be condemned if we go to the judgment unprepared and with no fruit! We shall be condemned for doing nothing.

Jesus related the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. In this story a man was beaten and robbed and left on the road. A Priest and a Levite passed by the man and didn't make any effort to help him. These men apparently were indifferent. But there was the Good Samaritan who stopped and aided the man in every way he could. The Priest and Levite did not beat and rob the man, but they were guilty of failing to do anything that would help him. They were guilty of the sin of doing nothing. The Samaritan who helped the man was called by Jesus, a real neighbor.

Do not be deceived into thinking that you can be guilty of the sin of doing nothing in this life and get by. James 1:22 says, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." That verse will stand against you when you answer to Jesus. Remember in James 4:17 James said, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Why Christians Fail

Christians must be committed people. Paul said in Titus 3:1, “. . . be ready unto every good work.” But it is quite evident that many Christians are not committed. Why?

First, because of the attitude which says, “we don’t have to” many fail. There are only three things all of us must do. They are summed up in John 5:28, 29, “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and they shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” In these verses we see that we must die, go to judgment, and go to our final rewards. The weak Christian is often offended when the preacher strongly emphasizes attendance to all services and participation in all the works of the church. The committed Christian never has the attitude that he just has to do something, he will want to do something! What if God just did what he had to? What if he gave us just enough air, sunshine, food, and water to get by?

Secondly, many Christians fail because they feel they are “doing as well as the next guy.” The lukewarm member often harps, “Well, I am doing as much as so and so.” Friends, when will we learn that we can’t compare ourselves to each other? Christ is the true standard by which we must measure our lives. In I Peter

Why Christians Fail

2:21 we read of Christ, “. . . having left us an example that we should follow his steps.” Thus, we are to imitate Christ!

Thirdly, Christians often fail because they use, “average” as a standard. We like to think we are an average congregation of Christians. Yet, in Matthew 22:14 we read, “For many are called but few are chosen.” The Bible states that the average will never be saved! In Genesis 6:8 we read, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Out of all the people in Noah’s day, only he and his family were saved. Only two adults that left Egypt and headed to Canaan entered into the promised land.

Jesus said in Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” Now the word “strive” in the Greek language means to “agonize.” How many people do you know, including yourself, who are agonizing in the cause of Christ and in the pursuit of eternal life? Friends, the fact is that Christians have only one standard and that is excellence.

Christian, you don’t have to be a failure. Jesus promised in Matthew 28:19-20, that if we would carry out his work, “. . . lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” Remember your business in life is not to remake yourself but to make the best of what God has made of you and you can do it with God’s help.

Respect For Law

We are living in a time in which the laws of the land and the laws of God mean little or nothing to many people. But no nation or individual can survive without law! God knew this when he created man and we must know that to disobey God's laws, whether they be civil or religious, is to destroy our nation and our souls! Let us now look a little closer at God's word and the subject of keeping the laws of the land and of God.

First of all, in Romans 13:1-2 we read, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained by God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Friends, you see here that God ordained and stands behind civil law and to scorn it is to scorn God!

In the second place, let us know that God has a law for property. In Exodus 20:15 God said, "Thou shall not steal." This same commandment is also carried over into the New Testament in Romans 13:9. God says you don't have the right to take that which belongs to another! We must respect the property of others!

Thirdly, God has a law for human decency and the right of others. In Matthew 22:39 Jesus said, "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." We are to "love" our

Respect for Law

neighbors. The word neighbor means, "one near." This definition is not just limited to the person who lives beside you, it is broad enough to include anybody within reasonable limits and seems to be used in the Bible to refer to all men. If we love our fellowman as ourselves, we will respect his rights!

In the fourth place, let it be known that God has a law for young people. In Ephesians 6:1-3 Paul states, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long upon the earth." Young people, it may be old fashioned to obey and respect your parents, but it is also anti-Christ not to do so!

In the fifth place, God has a law for his laws. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments." Do you love Christ?

Finally, God has a law for divine authority. Jesus in Matthew 28:19 said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." In Hebrews 5:9 we read, ". . . he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." There is no other supreme authority in the Christian religion but Jesus. We must respect and obey his will in all things.

By violating civil and religious laws, we shall reap what we sow in this life and in the life to come.

How Is Your Conscience?

The word "conscience" has been defined as the soul's ability to distinguish between good and evil, that inborn faculty that judges our actions based upon the knowledge of good and evil. The word conscience itself is not found in the Old Testament. It is strictly a New Testament word. Men today should know the place of the conscience in their lives and in their salvation.

What is the function of the conscience? John Milton, in his famous work "Paradise Lost", has God saying, "I will put my umpire, the conscience, in his breast." Truly the conscience functions like an umpire for it must call the plays of our life as it sees them based upon a knowledge of good and evil. Thus, let us suggest the fact that the conscience can act as an accuser of our sins! In II Samuel 24:10 we read, "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people." David here had shown a lack of trust in Jehovah and thus when he realized what he had done, his conscience accused him of sin. The conscience also can warn us of sin and keep us from sin. In Genesis 39:9 Joseph said to Potiphar's wife, who tried to lure him into immorality, ". . . how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" His conscience would not allow him to do that which he knew to be wrong.

What are the results of failing to heed our conscience? Those who fail to heed their conscience are like

How is Your Conscience?

an airplane pilot who does not heed his warning lights on his instrument panel. He would punish himself and many other people! Paul said in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself and none dieth to himself." Those who violate their conscience take all the joy and satisfaction out of life and live in fear that they may be discovered! Adam tried to hide from God in the garden because he was afraid God would find out that he had eaten the forbidden fruit. But friends, no man can hide from God who has violated his conscience!

What are the results of following our conscience? Joseph became the second most important man in all of Egypt because he listened to his conscience. In I John 3:21 we read, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness towards God." A man with a clean heart can approach God with confidence that God will hear and answer his prayers!

A word of caution must be given here. Man's conscience is not a safe guide alone. It is only safe when it acts in harmony with the New Testament! We note also the Bible teaches that the conscience can be defiled and hardened!

If your conscience is defiled there is only one way to cleanse it. Paul in Hebrews 9:14 said, "How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." You

How is Your Conscience?

must apply the blood of Christ. How do you do that? Obey the gospel of Christ if you are not a Christian. See Acts of the Apostles for Bible answers. If you are a wayward child of God see I John 1:7. How's your conscience?

Keeping Pure

Young people are in the news very often today. Many are saying that our young people have gone to the Devil. This is not true. The Devil has gone to them and every one else!

Paul, in writing to Timothy said in I Timothy 5:22, “. . . keep thyself pure.” Keeping ourselves pure isn’t easy today but God has not demanded anything of us that we cannot do. I want now to list five ways in which young and old alike can stay pure.

First, note the fact that there is divine aid. We have the grace of God as Christians. God, in II Corinthians 12:9 said to Paul, “. . . my grace is sufficient for thee . . .” God’s help for us will be sufficient. We have help in temptation. I Corinthians 10:13 says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful and will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able, but will with temptation provide a way of escape that ye might be able to bear it.” We also have the word of God to help us. II Peter 1:3 says, “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

Secondly, we can pray for purity. Paul in I Thessalonians 5:17 said, “Pray without ceasing.” James 5:16 says, “. . . the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” There is power in prayer.

Keeping Pure

Thirdly, if we can remember the results of impurity, we will strive harder to be pure. We sin against God, our friends, and our fellowman when we live impure lives. Moses said in Numbers 32:23, “. . . be sure your sins will find you out.” Paul in Romans 6:23 said, “The wages of sin is death . . .”

In the fourth place, believe in the existence of the Devil. Peter said in I Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be watchful, your adversary, the Devil, walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Peter says the Devil is our adversary and is out to destroy us. I John 3:8 says, “He that sinneth is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil.”

Finally, stay in touch with the Bible. Jesus in Matthew 5:8 said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” David in Psalm 119:11 said, “Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against thee.” God’s word is a powerful weapon against impurity. Speaking of heaven, John said in Revelation 21:27, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Impurity will keep you out of the book of life and heaven itself.

Revelations From The Cross

In Hebrews 12:1-2 Paul said, “. . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus who is the author and the perfecter of our faith . . .” If in this life we will look to the cross of Christ there will be at least four major revelations for us to consider.

First, the cross of Christ reveals God's attitude towards sin. Man calls sin an accident, God calls it an abomination. Man calls sin a blunder, God calls sin blindness. Man call sin a mistake, God calls sin madness. Man calls sin weakness, God calls sin willfulness. God hates sin because, “Everyone that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness” (I John 3:4). God hates sin because, “Then lust when it hath conceived, beareth sin, and sin when it is full grown bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). The cross of Christ was God's way of destroying sin. In I John 3:8 we read, “. . . to this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil.”

Secondly, the cross of Christ reveals man as he really is. The events that surround the cross show man taking off his religious mask only to reveal a soul ablaze with the fires of hell. Matthew 27:18 says, “For we know that for envy they had delivered him up.” In Matthew 27:23, “. . . but they cried out exceedingly, let him be crucified.” Peter in describing the men who sent Jesus to the cross

Revelations From the Cross

said in Acts 2:23, "Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay." The sinfulness of the people is seen in Matthew 27:25, "And all the people answered and said, his blood be on us and on our children." Truly, the events at the cross depict man at his worst, while God is at his best.

In the third place, the cross of Christ reveals the love of God. Yes, here we see God at his best. Paul in Romans 5:8 said, "But God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet still sinners, Christ died for us." Paul writing in Ephesians 2:4 said, "But God being rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us." God's love is an everlasting love. "O give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good, for his loving kindness endureth forever" (Psalm 138:1). John says simply, but yet so profoundly, "God is love" (I John 4:8).

Finally, the cross of Christ reveals that man's hopes can become a reality. Man's hope for the forgiveness of his sins can become a reality because of the cross. In Ephesians 1:7 Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace." Man's hope of being at peace with God can become a reality. Paul in Colossians 1:20 said, ". . . having made peace through the blood of the cross . . ." Last, but not least, man's hope for an eternal resting place has become a reality through the cross. Paul in Philippians 3:20 said, "For our citizenship is in heaven . . ."

Judgment Of Christ

Someday Jesus Christ will return again and shall exercise his authority as judge of the quick and the dead. That Jesus will be our judge is abundantly clear from the Bible. Paul in II Corinthians 5:10 said, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ . . ." Paul in II Timothy 4:8 said, "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give to me in that day, and not to me only but to all them that love his appearing."

With the statements above impressed on our minds let us turn to the second chapter of Romans for additional information about the judgment of Christ.

First, in Romans 2:2 we read, "And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth . . ." Jesus in John 17:17 said, ". . . thy word is truth." We then are to be judged by the word of God. Here then we can also see the importance of obeying the truth. Jesus in John 8:32 said, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

In the second place, note Romans 2:6, "Who will render to every man according to his works." Paul points out the importance of works in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God hath aforetime prepared that we should walk in them." Though we cannot earn salvation through works, our works help us to appropriate God's grace and

Judgment of Christ

Christ's blood which can save us!

Thirdly, Romans 2:11 Paul says, "For there is no respect of persons with God." Verse thirteen of this chapter says, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." God will not play favorites on the day of judgment. Either you have kept his will or you have not. If you have, you will be rewarded, and if you have not kept his will, don't beg for mercy, for mercy will no longer be in force. God's sense of justice will prevail. Revelation 22:12 says of Jesus, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." We had better use the here and now to prepare for our reckoning with almighty God's son, Jesus the Christ!

Privilege And Responsibility

In Amos 3:1-2 we read, "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities." God had blessed the nation of Israel with privileges that no other nation enjoyed. God delivered them from Egypt with its oppression and slavery. God sent Moses as a deliverer to lead Israel from the power of the Pharaoh. God provided Israel with a promised land. Yet, Israel seemed always to forget that all of these blessings brought with them corresponding responsibilities. The failure of Israel to carry out her responsibilities brought punishment to her people.

Christians should learn some lessons from Israel's history. Note I Corinthians 10:11, "Now these things happened unto them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition . . .!" Christians have been delivered from sin. They have been released from the oppression of the Devil. Christians have been purchased from the slave market of iniquity. Paul in Romans 6: 17-18 says, "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered, and being made free from sin ye became servants of

Privilege and Responsibility

righteousness." God sent Jesus into the world to deliver us from sin and to lead us out of the clutches of sin. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "For the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." Like Israel we today are helpless and hopeless without a deliverer! We too have a promised land. In Hebrews 4:9 Paul said, "There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God." The Bible calls this place heaven. As with Israel, we too must bear the responsibilities that privileges bring with them! In Luke 12:48 Jesus said, ". . . And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him shall they ask the more!" We must know today that we will be punished as was Israel if we fail to meet our responsibilities. Paul in Hebrews 4:11 said, "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience." Those who read this are blessed to live in a land that has been showered with a vast amount of physical and spiritual blessings. What are you doing to make sure you continue to receive them?

Requirements Of God

In Micah 6:8 we find one of the great texts of the Old Testament. The prophet said, “. . . what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God?”

First, all men must do justly. Worship alone is not sufficient for God's people. God requires just living. The word “just” here in this text means, “to act with moral responsibility.” Micah 2:1 shows God's attitude towards injustice. Note these words, “Woe unto them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.”

Misuse of power is one of the great tragedies of all times! Let those in authority know they will answer to a higher authority someday! For “we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body . . .!”

Secondly, God requires lovingkindness. Lovingkindness means, “to show mercy and compassion.” In Luke 10 Jesus relates the parable of the good Samaritan. This man finds a man beaten, robbed, and half-dead. Then Luke 10:33 says, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he was moved with compassion (lovingkindness)” Remember James 2:13, “For judgment is without mercy

Requirements of God

to him that showed no mercy!”

Finally, God wants us to walk humbly with him. The word “humbly” means, “to bow low, to act as a little child.” Amos 3:3 says, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

Unless your life is in harmony with God’s laws you cannot walk in a humble manner with God! We need more men like Enoch. In Genesis 5:24 the Bible says, “Enoch walked with God . . .” In Genesis 6:3, “. . . and Noah walked with God.” We need more Noah’s today! Who have you been walking with lately? God or the Devil will accompany us in this life. The choice is yours!

Can Man Know God?

Can man know God? Does man understand God or does man create God? If man cannot know God, then Christianity is a dream or an illusion! To answer this question let us examine some different views on this question. There are four basic world views towards a knowledge of God.

First, there is **MATERIALISM**. This view holds that all is matter and that all events are caused by natural causes.

Secondly, there is **AGNOSTICISM**. This view denies that we can really know for sure the fact that God exists.

Thirdly, there is **PANTHEISM**. This view denies a personal God and cannot distinguish God from nature. All is God and God is all, says the Pantheist.

Fourthly, there is the view called **PERSONALISM**. This is the Christian view of God. It believes that God is a personal and a knowable God. This view separates God from matter and nature.

Which of these views are we to hold to? Well, if we can prove one to be right the others will automatically fall. So let's examine **PERSONALISM** to prove the other views wrong.

The **PERSONALISM** view is divided into two areas. First, there is general revelation. This is where revelation with unaided reason can arrive at the idea that God does exist. God has revealed himself in nature. David in

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Psalm 19:1 said, "The heavens declare the glory of his handywork." Paul in Romans 1:20 in condemning the Gentiles said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so they are without excuse." As man observes the change of seasons, the movement of heavenly bodies with mathematical precision, the complexity of life and the human body, he sees plan, purpose, and design and knows that behind it all there has to be a planner, a designer, a being with supernatural power. Man may not know who this being is, but he knows that he exists.

The second area of the view we call **PERSONALISM**, we shall call special revelation. This is revelation given by God to those who are aware that he exists. This revelation is the working of God in actual historical events. We see God in history in his dealings with Israel. We see God working through his word, the Bible, which is of itself a living miracle. Externally the Bible has had great influence on all cultures. It has outsold the world's greatest literary productions. It is the most translated book in all history. It has survived all efforts hurled against it to destroy it. Internally, we find the Bible dealing with sin, sex, and self-control. Its doctrines are well suited to the needs of man. All 66 books are unified by purpose. They were written by over 40 men throughout a 1600 year period without a contradiction! The life of Jesus as he lived with men and his effect on the world for the next

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2000 years cannot be overlooked. The some 525 specific prophecies he fulfilled in his life forever prove his divinity and the fact that God does exist.

“Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he set more pens in motion and furnished more themes for sermons, orations, discussions, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.”

Truly, the life of the Son of God, as well as the numerous other evidences place a monumental hurdle that the materialist, the agnostic, and the pantheist can never get over!

Does Religion Bore You?

In Malachi 1:13 we read, "Ye say also, behold, what a weariness it is and ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye bring an offering; should I accept this at your hand, saith Jehovah?" This was a time of material and spiritual famine. The prophet Malachi plainly pointed out their sins. They were simply bored with religion!

Boredom is a major problem in society. Boredom accounts for so much unhappiness in this prosperous land. It is the reason that nightclubs, taverns, and dance floors are so successful. It causes many to live for entertainment and pleasure. It causes juvenile delinquency. It is a major factor in divorce. Truly, we are a generation with everything to live with but nothing to live for! Boredom is a problem in religion today. It is boring because man has made something of religion that God never intended.

First, men have made religion cheap. They have tried to give as little as possible for it. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, "For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."

Secondly, men have made religion boring by making it formal. We see in Malachi 1 that the Jews had not ceased trying to please God but they had substituted animal sacrifices for righteous living. We cannot worship

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God on the Lord's day and then live like the rest of the world the next six days. In James 4:4 we read, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Thirdly, these people made their religion oppressing instead of a blessing. In Malachi 3:13, 14 we read, "Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, what have we spoken against thee? Ye never said it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his charge . . .?" They turned others away by making it ugly and unprofitable.

We tell our kids today that religion is okay as long as it doesn't cost anything. As long as parents don't have to give up their beer, shorts, cigarettes, and lack of attendance to the Sunday and Wednesday night services, religion is fine.

What is the cure for boredom in religion? It can be cured by four things.

First, let God say something to you every day through his word. Study! II Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God . . ."

Secondly, say something to God every day. In I Thessalonians 5:17 Paul said, "Pray without ceasing."

Thirdly, say something for God every day. Tell someone about Christ as we are told to do in Matthew 28:19, 20.

Fourth, and last, do something for God every day.

Does Religion Bore You?

In Titus 3:1 we are told, “Be ready unto every good work.”

Follow these four simple rules and no more will boredom fill your life and your relationship with Christ.

Imitating Christ

The Bible teaches that all professed followers of Christ should seek to imitate Christ. Romans 8:29 says that we are, “. . . to be conformed to the image of his son.” I Thessalonians 1:6 Paul said, “Ye became imitators of us and of the Lord . . .” I Peter 2:21 says, “. . . because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow his steps.” In I John 2:6 John said, “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself to walk, even as he walked.”

Thus, quite plainly we are to strive to become Christ-like. If we imitate Christ we will seek to do God's will instead of our own! Jesus in Luke 22:42 said, “. . . Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.” In John 4:34 Jesus said, “. . . my meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to accomplish his work.” In John 6:38 Jesus said, “For I am come down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me.”

Are you as a professed follower as concerned about doing the will of the Father as our Lord was? If not, you are not Christ-like!

Secondly, if we imitate Christ we will seek to serve rather than to be served! Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.” In John 5:17 Jesus said, “My Father worketh until now and I work.”

Imitating Christ

Friends, the Lord expects us to serve. In John 9:4 Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." Jesus in Luke 9:23 said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Daily cross-bearing is required from those who would follow Jesus.

Finally, if you would imitate Christ you would be compassionate! The word compassionate means, mercy in action! This word carries with it the idea of sympathy and pity that is put into action! It won't do any follower of Christ any good simply to wish that men's needs were met if the follower doesn't do something about them! God wants action and not words. Note I John 3:17-18 which says, "Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth a brother in need and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth." Yes, compassion is a Christ-like quality that all must possess if we are to imitate and serve our Lord. Are you imitating Christ?

First, man is turning away from the living God to the gods of science. There is no doubt that science has done much to better men. But men about ready to slip into eternity cannot say, "Science is my shepherd!" Science, said someone, has turned the world into a neighborhood but only Christianity has turned much of the

himself. Even though there is some doubt about man's ability there is still great evidence that man is trusting in

rightly so!
 ning to doubt man's ability to direct his footsteps and Korean conflict, and the war in Vietnam, are men beginning to doubt man's ability to direct his footsteps and in ourselves. In this century after two world wars, the know that rather than trusting in God we want to trust scriptural definition of "belief" I know of. Yet, we all edge him and he will direct thy paths." This is the best upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths. In all thy ways said, "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths." This is the best edge him and he will direct thy paths." This is the best know that rather than trusting in God we want to trust in ourselves. In this century after two world wars, the Korean conflict, and the war in Vietnam, are men beginning to doubt man's ability to direct his footsteps and rightly so!

This may sound like a strange topic to many people. But is it? The word "believe" as used in the scriptures means, "to trust, to rely, to be persuaded by, to yield, and conviction." Do you trust God? Do you really rely on God? Have you really yielded all to God? Are your convictions of and in God? Have you allowed God to persuade you to live his way? In Proverbs 3:5-6 Solomon said, "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths." This is the best edge him and he will direct thy paths." This is the best scriptural definition of "belief" I know of. Yet, we all know that rather than trusting in God we want to trust in ourselves. In this century after two world wars, the Korean conflict, and the war in Vietnam, are men beginning to doubt man's ability to direct his footsteps and rightly so!

Do You Believe In God?

Do You Believe in God?

world into a brotherhood! Jesus said in Matthew 22:39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Secondly, men have turned to government as the giver of every good thing. James 1:17 says, "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights . . ." We are to turn to God, not government, for our needs as is seen in II Thessalonians 3:10, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." Money also is being trusted as a god! If I just had enough money, man says, everything would be okay. Yet, I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil . . ."

We all are aware of the results of a failure to really believe in God. This nation has 500,000 mentally ill, 37,000 suicides a year, over nine billion dollars a year spent on alcohol, the teaching of sex education in some of its public schools which lowers its morals and raises its skirts, and it allows the evolutionary theory to be taught as a fact which undermines true faith in God. Truly, we are reaping what we have sown. There needs to be a renewed call to believe in God. Fathers should according to Ephesians 6:4, ". . . teach their children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord." Churches today must get out of the recreation business and must get down to "making known the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). Too much concern is manifested towards the "social gospel" rather than the **SAVING GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!** People need to be taught and need to develop real faith in God.

Lord, Increase Our Faith

In Luke 17:5 Jesus uttered a short but a very powerful and meaningful prayer, “. . . increase our faith.” This is a prayer that we all should pray. This is the same prayer of the father who brought his child to Jesus and said in Mark 9:24, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” We often pray God to improve our health, to increase our wealth, or to prolong our days. How often do we pray, “Lord, increase our faith?” Let us look at this text more carefully.

First, we see that the apostles were clearly dissatisfied with their faith. There was a time in Jesus' earthly ministry when he and his disciples were in a ship and the waves started coming in so much that the disciples feared for their lives. He said to his disciples in Matthew 8:26, “Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? . . .” Though the apostles' faith often failed them, they did not give up. Many of us often give up when our faith fails. But let me say that any time you are attempting to do God's will you will be a success even if that which you are attempting fails. God does not measure success in results as much as he measures it in effort that we put forth. If so, we all have a chance to be saved, if not, we are all lost. Notice though this dissatisfaction led the apostles to seek to improve their faith. Paul said in Philippians 3:13, 14, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but

Lord Increase Our Faith

this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press on towards the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Secondly, there is a great need to increase our faith. Christianity is a religion of faith and without a living, active, dynamic faith no man can be saved. Paul in Hebrews 11:6 said, “For without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Further, we live by faith. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:7, “For we walk by faith and not by sight.” We need great faith to help us stand up under the temptations, trials, and onslaughts of the Devil which are about us every day that we live. Thus John said in I John 5:4, “. . . and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

In the third place, let us notice the manner in which we can increase our faith. There are three ways to increase our faith.

First we must have the desire. Without this there is no use trying the other two steps.

Secondly, we must go to the source of faith, the Bible. In Romans 10:17 Paul said, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

Thirdly, we must apply our faith or the first two steps will be useless.

Lord Increase Our Faith

We must remember that if we pray this prayer, that God expects our cooperation. If we pray for health we must do our part in caring for our bodies. If we pray for the lost to be saved, we must do our part in leading them to Christ. Remember that there is a law in nature and in the spiritual realm which says that the less we use something, the less use we have of it. But the more we use something the greater the capacity to use it. What about your faith, is it dead because of non-use or is it vibrant, active, and dynamic? Remember Jesus' words to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:10 when he said, ". . . be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

The Effect Of Your Absence

If you do not attend worship services on a regular basis, why? Do you know enough about the Bible? If so, you ought to be a teacher. Or is it that you don't understand your teacher? Surely, any teacher who is worthy of the name will make improvements for your benefit. Could it be that the time is too early or too late? Many who read this, work at early and late hours and find no trouble in getting to work where the paycheck is involved! Could it be that you don't want to fellowship with God's saints on earth? If you do not enjoy associating with God's people now, you will never enjoy heaven!

Do you not know that Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?" Don't you want to be with Jesus? You say you need the rest and just can't attend on a regular basis. Friend, you'll have plenty of time to rest on the other side of the river of death. You must work now! Jesus in John 9:4 said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

Isn't it amazing that Christians will drive a couple of hundred miles to a ball game? They will pay high prices for tickets and then will shout their lungs out for three or four hours. What could the cause of Christ do with that kind of dedication? Why, the world could be evangelized in our own generation.

The Effect of Your Absence

The truth is, that so many so-called Christians have one foot in the aisle and one eye on their watch and when the last Amen is said, they dart out the door and say that God's people are not friendly!

Recently, an article recorded the conversation of a Christian and a non-Christian. The non-Christian said, "Is it right to dance?" The Christian said, "I didn't know that a Christian wanted to dance." Is it right for a Christian to miss a service of the church? Our answer is, I didn't know that a Christian wanted to miss a single service of the church!

What are the effects of your absence? First, your mind is not on Christ and his word! Yet, Jesus said in Matthew 22:37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind." We are to love God with our minds! We must have our mind on God's word because the primary purpose of the church is to teach. Ephesians 3:10-11, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he hath purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Secondly, the non-members thought you were a hypocrite. Most congregations of God's people have non-members who attend more faithfully than many so-called members! Paul in I Corinthians 10:32 said, "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to the Jew, or to

The Effect of Your Absence

Greeks, or to the church of God.” How many Christians are a stumbling block to non-Christians?

Thirdly, the faithful are discouraged when you are absent. The faithful know Hebrews 10:25, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the custom of some is but exhort one another so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh.” The atmosphere is much more cheerful when all of God’s family are together.

Finally, you place your soul in grave danger. What if Jesus returns while you are out on the lake? Jesus in Matthew 24:44 said, “. . . for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Think of the fact also that you starve your soul when you do not attend. Luke 4:4 says, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

In closing, note the words of Peter addressed to the wayward Christians, “For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it to turn away from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (II Peter 2:21).

Christ, The Friend Of Man

No man can truly live without friends. How valuable they can be when they are really needed. Just as man can't really live physically without human friends, neither can man really live spiritually without Jesus Christ, the true friend of man! His value can't be measured by earthly standards. The fact is, there is no greater friend than Christ.

We would expect an earthly friend to feed us when we are hungry. Jesus, the friend of man, will provide for our physical hunger. In Matthew 6:25 Jesus said, "Therefore take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what he shall drink . . ." Jesus continued in verses 32 and 33 by saying, ". . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Yet, Jesus in Luke 4:4 said, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." Christ, the friend of man, can provide something that no other can, the words of life that feed, nourish, and sustain the human soul! In John 6:35 Jesus described himself as the bread and water of life. What a friend we have in Jesus.

We would also expect a friend to help us when we are sick. Jesus has given man the power of prayer that availeth much if uttered by a righteous man according

Christ, the Friend of Man

to James 5:16. Prayer can do great wonders for the sick. But Jesus Christ is also the great physician of the human soul and can cure man of much more than physical illness. He can heal man of the spiritual disease of sin. What friend do you have that can stand by and help you when you are spiritually ill?

A real friend would lay down his life for you. Certainly many have done this in the past. Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus, the friend of man, has given his life for you. Others may give their lives to save your physical life, but show me a friend who could and did die that you might live spiritually. There is not a friend like the lowly Jesus!

Lastly, you would expect a friend to stand by you in death. Your friends may stand by your bedside and by the graveside, but that is as far as they can go. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 12:5, ". . . man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets." Only Jesus, the friend of man, is able to go with you beyond the grave. Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 as he commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel, ". . . lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In Revelation 3:5 Jesus said, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels."

Christ, the Friend of Man

*“What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and
griefs to bear. Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered
with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge,”*
wrote George Scriven and C. C. Converse when they
penned the song, “What A Friend We Have in Jesus.”
Make Jesus your friend today.

A Call To Action

For sixteen years the rebuilding of the temple had ceased. The prophet Haggai was sent by God to stir up the people and to point out their sins.

Let us now note their sins and the consequences. Haggai 1:2 says, "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying this people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Verse four says, "Is it time for yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth in waste?"

The people didn't have much time for the house of God but they had plenty of time for themselves and their own interests. Does this sound familiar? Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God . . ."

Too many professed Christians allow the work of the church to go unattended because they are so wrapped up in their own interests. We have no time but today and we must use it for Christ's church! Failure to consider God's work first will bring consequences that many are not aware of!

In Haggai 2:6 we see what happened to the Israelites. "Ye have sown much but bring in little; ye eat, but have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

Could it be, reader, that the reason that you are

A Call to Action

not prospering is very much linked with your failure to attend to the word and work of God while you have been so self-centered?

Where is our faith, friends? We feel like we have to kill ourselves just to make a living and do not have any time for God! How wrong we are when we think in this way! In Psalm 37:25 David said, "I have been young and now I am old; yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

God is calling you into action. You can't afford not to respond!