

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

This We Believe

Our land is full of religious periodicals and journals. yet, The Bible Teacher is quite different from all of them because of its unique plea for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity of the first century. All who are writing for the Bible Teacher and those who are faithfully supporting its publications are members of the church of Christ. Most of whom have come out from various religious bodies and sects to be in the one body of Christ, which is His church, the ekkelesia of which He is the builder (Matthew 16:18), the head (Colossians 1:18) and the Saviour (Ephesians 5:23).

We believe that the Bible is the only source of authority in all religious matters, and that we should accept what it teaches and reject all doctrines and commandments of men. We believe, we must examine every religious teaching in light of what the Bible says and that if something is not taught in God's Bible then we should not do that. Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we believe, is the revelation of God to man. God has spoken and we must listen to Him. Since the Bible contains two testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament, we believe, therefore, in rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15). This means that we should know that the first part of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament, was the old will of God. It was given to the people whom God called Israel, or the children of Israel, who formerly were chosen by God to be His special people, for a specific purpose of bringing Christ, The Saviour of mankind into the

world. The apostle Paul said, concerning the Old Testament, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." (Galatians 3:24, 25). This is not to say, however, that the Old Testament is no longer the word of God. The Old Testament tells us how God created the world and man. It tells us how sin entered the world and about the promise of God that He would send the Saviour of man. Then there are books in the Old Testament which contain history of the nation of Israel. There are also books of prophets whom God had sent in Israel to correct them and to remind them of the coming Saviour of the world. There are commandments written in the Old Testament which God expected His people Israel to obey, but none of those commandments are for us today. (Deuteronomy 5, Exodus 20, Exodus 31). God does not expect us to worship Him today as He expected His people under the Old Testament to worship Him then. None of the things which God required of them under the Old Testament, such as, making animal sacrifices, giving tithes, and keeping Sabbaths, are for us today. Because we today are living under a different testament, the New Testament. Sure, we can learn and teach many many wonderful and great lessons from the pages of the Old Testament of the Bible, such as, the obedience of Noah, the faithfulness of Abraham, and the disobedience of Saul, (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). But we are not expected to keep and follow its commandments.

We believe, when Christ came and died on the cross He fulfilled all prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Him, and thereby took away the Old Testament law and in its place has established His New Testament, which is the will of God for us today. According to Colossians 2:14; "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Hebrews 8:7 & 13 says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. . . . In that He says, "A new covenant" He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." The writer of the book of Hebrews began his epistle with these words: "God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son. . . ." Christ, after His resurrection from the dead, said, "ALL authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18).

We, therefore, believe that Christ according to His promise has established His church, which is His spiritual body, and to which He

adds all those who obey His commands to be saved. (Acts 2:47; Hebrews 5:8, 9). According to the New Testament teaching, to be saved and to become a Christian and a member of the church of Christ, one must believe in Christ, must repent of sin, must confess Christ to be the Son of God, and must be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of sins as we read from Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39. When one does this, Christ Himself adds such a person, according to Acts 2:47, to His church. As a Christian one must abide in the doctrine of Christ, in His New Testament teaching. Our worship and our living and our whole life should be patterned after the New Testament teachings. (2 John 9, 10).

This is our firm conviction that denominationalism is wrong. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Although there may be many sincere and nice people in various denominational churches, but this does not make denominational churches right. Christ prayed for oneness and unity of all His people. (John 17:20-22). God desires for all of us to be Christians only and not Catholics or Protestants. He wants to see us all united in His one church, where we should all be worshipping Him alike, according to His New Testament Teaching. This is possible and can be accomplished, if people will be willing to empty themselves of their denominational and sectarian pride, if people will be willing to discard creed books of men and follow the Bible alone. How can people expect to be called Christians, followers of Christ, and yet live divided in hundreds of denominational sects most of which do not even wear the name of Christ?

The Apostles--Weaknesses and Strengths

J.C. Choate

Sometimes we feel sorry for ourselves. We make all kinds of excuses for not obeying God. We even put forth the argument that we are too weak, that we are too sinful, and that the Lord would never forgive us. Who are we kidding? Who do we think the Lord died for anyway? He said he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Here are his very words: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17).

We know of course that Jesus was without sin, he was pure, he was perfect. Paul said concerning Christ, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Hebrew writer said, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15,16). Then Peter added, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (2 Peter 2:22). But after Christ, who would come next to him? We would then think of the apostles of Christ. Were they also without sin? Not exactly.

The scriptures tell us that Christ chose twelve disciples or apostles to teach and train so that they might carry on his work after his departure. (Matthew 10). He knew that they were human and would make mistakes. To be sure that they did not forget what he taught them, and that they taught only the truth, then he promised to send the Comforter upon them to guide them and to direct them in their preaching and work. (John 14:26; John 16:13). But what about them before they received the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Let us take a look at some of them.

First, we know that Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve. (Matthew 26:47). He took care of the money bag and whatever there was to be kept in it, (John 12:6; 13:29). There are indications that he was very stingy. Later, we read of him participating in the last supper (Matthew 26), and finally he agreed to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but afterward in remorse went out and hanged himself. (Matthew 26:47-56; Matthew 27:3-10).

Second, Peter denied the Lord three times. Although he said he would never leave the Lord, and was even willing to die for him, still Jesus told him that before the cock would crow on the night of his betrayal that he would deny him three times. (John 13:26-38). Sure enough, Peter did just that. After he had done so, the record says, "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." (Matthew 26:69-75). Of course we know that Peter repented of his sins of denial and unfaithfulness and went on to become a great preacher in the Lord's church. He and the other apostles preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2). Later, Peter preached the first sermon to the Gentiles as recorded in Acts 10, 11. He also wrote two letters that are included in the New Testament. So, Peter

made his mistakes but he was big enough to correct them so that he could continue to serve the Lord.

Third, there was Thomas who doubted the Lord's resurrection. We read the following account, after the resurrection: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29). Now what makes this so important is the fact that previous to this Thomas said that before he would believe that Christ had been raised from the dead that he would have to see his hands and the print of the nails and put his finger in those prints, and then he would have to thrust his hand into his side. (John 20:24,25). So Jesus let him see and feel for himself and then his doubts were removed. This stands out so strongly that Thomas is often referred to as Doubting Thomas, but he more than proved himself in the years that followed. According to secular history, he came to India to preach the gospel and after converting souls and establishing congregations on the west side of the country, traveled over to the east side where he was speared to death near Madras.

Fourth, we know that Paul before his conversion opposed the Lord and his church, persecuting his people near and far. After his conversion, however, he immediately preached Christ as a resurrected Lord (Acts 9), made three missionary journeys, and penned several letters that are included in the New Testament. But having persecuted the Lord's church bothered him throughout his life to the point that he counted himself as the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15). In other words, he reasoned that if the Lord could forgive him after he had done all that he had, because of his grace and mercy, then surely he could forgive anyone. We know, according to secular history that Paul eventually was martyred for Christ.

No doubt the other apostles, had their weaknesses and strengths, but they in the end proved their loyalty and faithfulness to Christ and his cause. All, except John, who was exiled to Patmos for some time, were willing to die for their Lord at the hands of the enemies of Jesus.

Now if the very apostles of Christ were sinners in the beginning, and even after they became followers and apostles they could still sin

and make mistakes, and yet they could be forgiven and go on to be great workers for the Lord, then surely the Lord can save you from your sins. Think also about those who participated in the crucifixion of Christ. Some of those were present when the gospel was first preached in Jerusalem, and probably some of those were obedient to the Lord and were saved and the Lord himself added them to his church. (Acts 2).

Even after one becomes a Christian, John said, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:7-10).

The only one who cannot be forgiven is the person who has died in his sin or who refuses in this life to repent of his sins. But as long as life is in one, there is hope for him since it is possible that he may yet choose to repent of his sins and obey God. If one will do so then he can be forgiven. (Acts 2:38). The only thing, don't risk your soul by waiting too long. The Bible teaches that ". . . behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Especially For Women

"What Can I Do for the Church?"

Betty Burton Choate

Sometimes today Christian women seem not be able to find work to do in the Lord's Church. Because the leadership in the public assemblies is to be taken by men, many seem to think that a woman's work is simply to be present for the worship periods and to engage in worship. "And let a woman learn in silence with all submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11, 12). But does our work end there?

No. Actually, worshipping God is the privilege of the Christian. It is not his service or work. We are allowed the honor of praising God, of drawing spiritual strength from our worship, our studies, and our fellow-

ship with one another. But our work for God continues throughout the week.

Philippians 4:3 says, ". . .help these women who laboured with me in the gospel." Romans 16:13, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea. . .for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila (husband and wife), my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life." Verse 6, "Greet Mary, who laboured much for us." In Acts 16:14-15, when Lydia became a Christian she opened her home to Paul and the others travelling with him. In Acts 16:26, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and "taught him the way of God more accurately." Acts 9:39 tells of Dorcas, a Christian woman who had been helpful to the widows in her area, stitching tunics and garments. Titus 2:3-4 says that the older women are to teach the younger women. Eunice and Lois (II Timothy 1:5) made it their work to thoroughly teach the Scriptures to Timothy as a child and young man in the home. Mark 15:40-41 tells of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses and Salome, ". . . who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee."

So, women of the first century were busy Christians, and we must be busy today if we are to please God.

What can a woman do in the work of the church? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) First, make sure that you and your family are always present for worship services.
- 2) Do not fail to properly train your children spiritually at home.
- 3) Teach a class for ladies or children during the Bible Study hour.
- 4) Volunteer to come early to prepare the Lord's Supper.
- 5) Stay after worship to wash the tray after the Supper.
- 6) Plan with the other ladies to work a few minutes after worship to straighten and leave the auditorium looking orderly.
- 7) Meet with the other ladies and plan together--
 - A) to visit sick or absent members.
 - B) to meet regularly for a ladies study class.
 - C) to take food to some sick neighbour.
 - D) to have a special cleaning day for the building.

- E) to prepare food for church fellowships.
- 8) Talk among your friends and close neighbours and encourage them to come to your house one morning or afternoon each week for tea and a period of Bible study.
 - 9) With your husband, conduct Bible studies in the homes of nearby people who have shown interest in the church and will allow you to come.
 - 10) Be aware of needs in your neighbourhood that you may be able to help with, emotional, physical, or spiritual.

Actually, women comprise a great part of the working force of the church. As we take advantage of our opportunities, we will see the church grow, and we ourselves will grow in the faith.

"Let There Be No Denominations"

Clem Thurman

When the apostle Paul came to Corinth, he found a most unique city: a commercial seaport, a "melting pot" of humanity of that era, a people diverse in both background and interests. When the gospel was preached there, "Many of the Corinthians, hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Thus the church of the Lord was begun in Corinth, and Paul stayed about two years to strengthen and build up the church. But after the apostle's departure, a number of problems arose. One of the first, and most serious, was division. "Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). Believers began to divide into "groups" and denominated themselves after Paul, Apollos or Peter (1 Cor. 1:12)--a situation much like is found in the religious world today.

No, I know that 1 Cor. 1:10 doesn't read exactly like our title, but the meaning is there: "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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." These were denominations, in any sense of that word. Thus God, by the apostle Paul, is addressing a condition that might be found in your city today. Had you asked any of those who said, "I am of Paul," I am sure they would have said that they

were Christians—but they were Christians of “this particular faith,” or they were “this kind of Christian.” They were divided and denominated themselves, and it is in this context that they were told, “Let there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1:10).

Because of this denominational condition in Corinth, Paul asks three questions that strike at the heart of such division. These questions were designed to bring all of these believers out of the sectarian, denominational spirit and back into the unity of the one body of Christ. They are found in 1 Cor. 1:13.

"IS CHRIST DIVIDED?"

Jesus prayed for unity of all believers, “That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in the thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me” (Jno. 17:20-21). The Lord never planned, nor desired, that His people should be divided. He forcefully taught, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation” (Matt. 12:25). The apostles likewise taught the necessity of unity in Christ (Eph. 4:1-6; Jude 3; etc.). It was much later in human history that man conceived the idea that division didn't matter, and that it was fine for each to have “the church of his choice.” Look around you. On nearly any corner is found a group that claims to follow Christ, yet is different from all other groups who make the same claim—in doctrine, faith, organization, worship, etc. And to separate themselves from those others, they “denominate” (or “name”) themselves with a designation whose purpose is to separate and divide them from others.

But, “Is Christ divided?” The whole system of denominationalism is based on the idea that Christ IS divided, and that He is with each of these denominations. But can anyone honestly believe that Christ is with one denomination teaching one thing, and is in another denomination teaching the exact opposite? Is Christ opposing Himself (Matt. 12:25) by participation in denominations that oppose each other? That is the very point Paul makes when he asks, “Is Christ divided?” It deserves an answer from every person who believes denominationalism is approved of Christ.

Some in Corinth could have protested, “We are not dividing Christ, we are only dividing ourselves.” But they knew better. Christ and his church are one (Eph. 5:22-32), and what is done to the church is done to Christ. When Saul was persecuting the church (Acts 8:3), Jesus asked him, “Why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). To seek to divide the church is to divide Christ. I believe that this question, honestly faced

by all, would forever destroy denominationalism. It is clear that Christ cannot be divided. Believers may depart from Christ, but they cannot divide Him and make Him oppose Himself.

"WAS PAUL CRUCIFIED FOR YOU?"

It was announced before His birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). He became the means of our salvation by His death on the cross (Heb. 2:9; 9:22; Col. 1:18-22; etc.), and the apostles said of Him: "In none other is there salvation" (Acts. 4:12). They preached "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (Acts 2:22-24, 36; 1 Cor. 2:1-2), for there is no other Saviour. Yet here in Corinth believers were calling themselves after the name of Paul! So Paul asked them, "Was Paul crucified for you?" The implication is clear. Only Christ died for you?" Only Christ can save. Therefore all should follow Christ and honor Christ by wearing the name of Christ.

The principle of following only Christ is everywhere taught in the word of God. Peter and John said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). They told the rulers, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28). The apostle John declared that "we have not God" when we go beyond the teaching of Christ (2 Jno. 9). And later in his letter to Corinth, Paul wrote, "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sake; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6). Don't follow anyone who was not crucified for you. Don't wear the name of anyone who didn't die to save you.

"WERE YOU BAPTIZED INTO THE NAME OF PAUL?"

The apostles never knew "there is nothing in a name," as many today declare. In fact, they knew better! The "name of Jesus Christ" denotes His authority, so that whatever we do is to be authorized by Christ: "In word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). When believers on Pentecost cried out, "What shall we do?" they were told, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). The household of Cornelius was commanded "to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48). And when Paul found some who had been baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist, he taught them of Christ

and His authority, and "they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). It would have been difficult to convince any of those people that there is nothing a name!

The implications of this question show the importance of baptism. Baptism is essentially into a name. And you don't have the right to wear a name unless you were baptized into it. When people were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, they were then called "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). But, Paul argues, they have no right to wear Paul's name because they were not baptized into that name. The "one baptism" (Acts 8:36-38; Eph. 4:5) made them one with Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27), and it was the name of Christ that they were to wear to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16).

To show the need for unity, Paul speaks of baptism. Why? Believers are "baptized into the death of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:3) in order that the blood of Jesus should "wash away" their sins (Acts 22:16). This same baptism is "into Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), where we are made one in Him (Eph. 2:14-16). Thus, all who are "baptized into the name of Jesus" (Acts 19:5) are "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). To show their relationship with Christ and with other Christians, Paul uses baptism in the name of Jesus. That should show the importance of both baptism and unity in Christ.

"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" These are three great questions. The Lord never intended that believers in Him should be divided into four hundred different groups. Denominationalism today is no more right than it was in Corinth 1900 years ago. It was wrong then, it is wrong now. Let us determine to lay aside all denominational loyalties and be one with Christ and with all those who believe in Christ. Let us reject every human creed, every human name and every human doctrine that separates us. Let us determine to be a members of the one body, the church, that we read about in the Bible, and be members of no other. Then, and only then, can we be united "in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10)

Back to the Bible

Johnny Ramsey

While I deeply appreciate the work of any man anywhere who called his fellows back to the Bible, I do not wish to wear that man's name in religion nor restore his personal views to earth. Why not just be a Christian? Why not just teach, believe and obey the sacred Scriptures? Even in the first century the exaltation of preachers and the using of their names as designations was strictly forbidden (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Such action was considered a mark of carnality. It is even so today!

Now, brethren, let us be honest and practical. As much as we may admire Alexander Campbell—his courage and brilliance—we dare not exalt, idolize, extol and defend his teachings. Campbell was just a man. He taught several things no true gospel preacher can endorse. Take, for instance, his leadership in the Missionary Society, or his strange views regarding the "thousand year reign." However, even if every-thing he taught was 100% correct, we owe it all to the Lord and the New Testament and not to Alexander Campbell! The sage of Bethany was an exceptional person, but we need to go beyond the hills of West Virginia all the way back to Jerusalem for doctrine. One quote from Christ or an apostle is worth more than a dozen from Campbell, Kipscomb or McGarvey! It is a mistake of the deepest order to lean upon "the glorious heritage of the Restoration movement" when we can bask in the sunlight of the old Jerusalem gospel. We would be wise to get back to the original blueprint and quit trying to prove our point from the writings of 1830.

Personally, I get concerned with preachers who desire to protect "our traditional stance in the religious world." This is equally as dangerous as overlooking the monumental courage it took for the restorers to break away from sectarian allegiance. But, to the genuine Christian, our Lord will always be esteemed as the greatest preacher of all. May we, therefore, follow His precepts, walk in His footprints and be content in the church purchased with His precious blood. We don't need Campbell's picture in our library or a pilgrimage to his tomb to inspire us to a closer walk with Jesus. Centuries ago Peter stood on top of a mountain, deeply impressed with Moses, Elijah and Christ. But, after the drama had finished its message, he "saw only Jesus" (Matt. 17:8). He is still the only One to whom we really owe allegiance. Any other emphasis but magnifies the folly of sectarianism.

The New Testament not only reveals the religion of Christ in vivid detail, but also gives a solemn warning to anyone who would add to or take away from the pattern of Christianity. Read 2 Jno. 9 and Rev. 22:18-19: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God. . . I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." Jesus makes it clear that, "The seed of the kingdom is the word of God" (Lk. 8:11). Thus, the power of truth resides not in apostolic succession, nor in the creeds and catechisms of men, but in the gospel of Christ. That gospel is contained within the New Testament. We dare not preach any other (Gal. 1:6-9).

Even the casual reader of the Bible would admit that pure Christianity existed in the first century. The New Testament gives us a clear picture of the church which Jesus built (Matt. 16:18). The worship, doctrine and life of the early Christians can be ascertained from a study of the word of God. Regardless of what has transpired between the first century and the twentieth, one can be a Christian today just like Paul, Peter, Stephen and Philip. Not "this kind" or "that kind" of Christian, but just a Christian: simply a member of the same church the first century Christians were members of. How? If we do what they did, teach what they taught, we will certainly be what they were. What denomination would that make us members of? Why, none, of course--and that is the point? None of the denominations were in existence for several centuries. Jesus prayed for unity, not diversity in religion (Jno. 17:20-21). Paul condemned division among believers (1 Cor. 1:10-13). We know, therefore, that the early Christians were members of the church of Christ and not of any sectarian movement.

Since the seed of the kingdom is the word of God men can be just Christians today as well. It will mean giving up all doctrines of men. Anything not taught in the scriptures will have to be dropped. For our Lord said that men worship in vain when they "teach for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mk. 7:7). Are you willing to investigate all that your religion or Church teaches in the sacred light of the Bible? You might find that instead of following true New Testament Christianity you have been adhering to the principles of some man or movement that arose centuries after Christ. Do you have a Bible reason for what you do? The Lord said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom

Dillard Thurman

Jesus Christ was this One, crowned "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:16). When He was questioned by Pilate: "Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (Jno. 18:37). No other king has ever attained His prominence and glory! Truly the Psalmist declared: "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." (Psa. 145:11). Men still speak of His kingdom!

DANIEL'S VIEW OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Over 750 years before Jesus of Nazareth was born "Daniel, a man greatly beloved," used the telescope of inspiration, and saw the glorious kingdom Jesus Christ would govern! Nebuchadnezzar had a strange, powerful dream; but on awakening he could not remember the dream, nor what it might portend! Being troubled and unable to sleep, he called in the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldean soothsayers to enlighten him. When they were not able to conjure up the dream, or divine the meaning, he placed the death sentence upon them all, even including Daniel and his fellows. But Daniel went to the Lord about the matter, and then came before the king with his revelation. He explained the terrible image of a man with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thigh of brass, and legs of iron with feet part of iron and part of clay. The king then knew about the dream; but what of the interpretation?

Then Daniel set forth the interpretation, saying to Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron." Thus he recognized the empire of Babylon, and introduced the empires of the Medo-Persians, the Grecian, and finally the Roman. Then to explain the stone cutout without hands that would destroy the feet (Roman era), he prophesied, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." He then concluded; "And

the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof is sure." (Dan. 2:1-45). So, once prophecy spake, it had to come to pass!

THIS KINGDOM SHINES IN PROPHECY!

Other prophets also spake of that time when this kingdom would flourish. Another prophet declared: "Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." (Jer. 23:5). Daniel spake of the coming of "The Ancient of days," and said, "And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven given to the people of the saints of the Most High whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Dan. 7:27) Two other prophets gave similar promises of the Lord's house that would be established in the last days, in Jerusalem, and to embrace all nations (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1). But this had to fit into the time frame set forth by Daniel; and any theory that sets forth the beginning of God's kingdom on earth in any other period than the Roman kings misses the mark! Let us notice: Jesus was born while Augustus Caesar reigned in Rome. His kingdom was established in Jerusalem during the reign of Tiberias, the glory days of the Roman Empire. The establishment of the kingdom of Christ fulfilled the prophecy!

Premillennialists vainly seek to escape the force of Old Testament prophecy, even to declaring that Jesus was not able to establish His Kingdom! Yet Jesus forcefully declared, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom come with power." (Mk. 9:1). A familiar question: "Who was the oldest man that ever lived?" is answered: "Methuselah, who lived 969 years!" But the advocates of a "future kingdom theory" would openly deny this in stating the kingdom has not yet come; and therefore some of them that heard Jesus speak 1950 years ago have not yet died! Now did Jesus lie? or, are there some 1950 year old people running around loose?

THE KINGDOM PREACHED IN PREPARATION!

The forerunner of our Lord spake of His kingdom, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt. 3:2). "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt. 4:17). He sent forth the twelve, telling them, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt. 10:7). In all

this, the kingdom is portrayed as in the future! This picture begins to clear up when He sent forth the seventy, telling them to say, "The kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto you." (Lk. 10:9). The kingdom had not been established on earth, was not present, but was "at hand" or "come nigh unto you." When Paul said, "The time of my departure is at hand," he did not mean that he had already died! When he said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," he was not saying the day had already come! And just so, during the ministry of Jesus on earth, the kingdom was "at hand", but was not then present.

THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM

Jesus gave a very definite answer to Pilate regarding His kingdom: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (Jno. 18:36). yet, the materialistic premillennialists still labour under the delusion that the Son of God is to reign over a political kingdom founded in Jerusalem in some fanciful "Buck Rogers" fashion! That is not the kind of kingdom over which He rules! To further clarify this to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or Lo, there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Lk. 17:20-21). Jesus reigns and rules within the hearts of His subjects; not on a literal throne in the dusty old city of Jerusalem!

Paul emphasized the spiritual nature of the kingdom, saying, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17). The outlook and aspirations of His subjects do not focus on worldly things! "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:20 ASV). Since our King reigns from on high, our interests will be centered there! If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:1-2). We "Look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10); and Jesus tells us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mt. 6:33). And even yet, those who dream of an earthly kingdom think in terms of material things, and ignore the spiritual!

CHRIST NOW REIGNS OVER HIS KINGDOM!

Before you can have a kingdom, you must have a king; and Christ now reigns in his kingdom! The Jews looked for an earthly kingdom, and Herod sought to kill a babe, thinking He would be king! The people thought of a material kingdom when they sought to make Jesus king by force (Jno. 6:15). It was in derision that they placed over His head: "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." (Mt. 37:27). Sad but true, many still do not know the spiritual nature of His kingdom, nor the present reign of its King! "The gospel of the kingdom" was preached as the law of His dominion. He had said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19), and Peter used those keys in opening the door to salvation! He preached Jesus Christ as a risen Lord, and stated the purpose of that resurrection. Speaking of David, he said, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up one to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ." (Acts 2:30-31). Was God able to carry out His promise to David, and enthrone Christ on that throne? Peter affirmed it! Soon Paul wrote that God "hath delivered us out of the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (Col. 1:13). The kingdom had become an actuality; Christ reigned over those who had entered the kingdom (Jno. 3:5); and God had given him the throne of His father David as promised (Lk. 1:32). They charged Paul for preaching these very truths (Acts 17:7)!

NO ROOM FOR AN EARTHLY KINGDOM!

Paul makes it clear that there will be no place for any "1,000 year Reign"! He wrote of the close of the gospel age, saying, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all things under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:24-26). Just where can premillennial architect find the space to fit in any "1,000 year reign" in this concise statement of facts? When the Hebrew writer addressed this subject, he wrote: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28). We cannot receive a kingdom that does not yet exist! But Christ now reigns over a kingdom which saints receive; and this is the only throne He will ever occupy as King! There is not one single verse of scripture that states that He will reign on

earth! He reigns from the right hand of God (Heb. 1:1-3).

WILL YOU BE SUBJECT TO THIS KING?

Should you want to become a subject of this glorious King, we plead with you to look back to where that kingdom was established on earth! On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Peter declared Jesus Christ as a risen Lord. When people asked what to do to be saved, the answer was plain and simple. Read it for yourself in Acts 2:33-47. Those folk accepted Christ as King and became His subjects! So can you, by doing the very same things! By obeying the gospel, you can enter His kingdom, live for Him now, and finally reign with Him forever (Rev. 22:5). Don't jeopardize your soul by seeking some visionary kingdom in Jerusalem! That has never been promised!

What is Raised From the Grave?

Dillard Thurman

The question asked concerned the nature of Jesus' raised body, and we are not informed as to what kind of body our Lord had after He was raised. I Cor. 15 was written to forever establish the promise of a bodily resurrection. This still stands! The first of the chapter establishes this by citing the eyewitness to a risen Lord! It does not state what kind of body they saw, but it was not a spirit. When Jesus met with them after His resurrection. He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Lk. 24:39). That which was raised was more than a spirit. The body had come from the tomb.

THE BIBLE VIEW OF THE RESURRECTION

One paramount truth taught in God's word is that the body will come forth from the grave! This also is adhered to by all primitive men. The American Indian believed in the Great Spirit and in the Happy Hunting Ground. Believing this, they buried weapons and belongings with the body for a future bodily existence! But this belief is crystalized on the pages of divine revelation! Why was Abraham so insistent in

buying Macpelah "that I may bury my dead out of my sight"? (Gen. 23). Why was he also buried there? Later there were Isaac, Rebekah and Leah. And then before dying in Egypt, Jacob arranged to have his body brought back to Macpelah. Why? They believed the body would rise again, and this hope was passed on to Joseph. "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11:22). If the body was not to be raised, why would Joseph arrange to have his body brought from Egypt to be buried near "Jacob's Well" near Shechem? The truth is, that those patriarchs lived by the same faith stated by Job: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not for another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job. 19:25-27). A future life was associated with the body which was buried at the close of life here on earth; and this necessitated the resurrection of the body!

WAS THE BODY OF JESUS RAISED?

So, what kind of body did Jesus have after His resurrection? That which went into the tomb had been raised! He was then taken from them, "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11). Now, just what did they see going into heaven? Was it not the same body they had recognized for three years in His ministry? Was it not the same body that was raised? Doesn't this account for an empty tomb? This, in essence, is the message of 1 Cor. 15!

HOW WAS THE BODY OF JESUS CHANGED?

When, where and how was the body of Jesus changed before He ascended? What kind of body did He have after the change? What then composed the body that ascended to God? These, and many more things, God did not see fit to reveal to us! Isn't it then presumptuous of us to speculate? And especially wrong for us to take an opinionated view and form a dogma? "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be free from the great transgression." (Psa. 19:13).

God did not see fit to reveal to us the change that is wrought at the resurrection of the body; and probably the reason is that will be His business, and not ours! I am not overly concerned with what kind of body I will have in heaven - I am too concerned with getting there!

A CLOSER LOOK AT 1 COR. 15

Since the question centers on 1 Cor. 15, let us go there for our investigation and study. Paul emphatically declared that Jesus rose the third day, "and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain upto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also." (Vs. 5-8). but just what was seen? From these witnesses of a risen Lord, do you get the idea that they recognized a bodily form that had been in the tomb? Paul included the resurrection of the body in saying. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain." (v. 14). On this subject Paul wrote: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It [THE BODY] is sown in corruption; it [THE BODY] is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: etc." (vs. 42-44). Now, what was he speaking about? and what was sown? Was that which was sown also raised? In what way had it been changed? Yet, it is still the same body that was sown (buried), even though changed!

A STATED FACT: WE SHALL BE CHANGED!

Both those who have died, and those who still live, will all be changed when Jesus comes again! "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (v. 53). Question: What is corruptible? and what is mortal? It is the body! Has God the power to change the corrupt body into incorruption? Has He the power to make this mortal body immortal? Would this differ in power from His saving us from sin? Our conversion was no less powerful because it was inward (affecting the soul). Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10). If judged of things done in the body, would not the body then be present at judgment? So,

what change takes place with the resurrection? Just remember this, God will take care of that, and He doesn't need my help! But I can't declare that it is impossible for God to make flesh and blood immortal and incorruptible if He so desires!

A LOOK AT THE BODILY RESURRECTION

Jesus spake very plainly in declaring: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (Jno. 5:28-29). Friends, what goes into the grave that is to come forth? Would we contend that the spirit or soul goes into the tomb? In describing the end of life, the Preacher said: "Then shall the dust return to dust as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." (Eccl. 12:7). The body returns to dust; the spirit returns to God! Note what came from the graves: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Mt. 27:52-53). The spirit or soul had not gone into the grave, and thus it was the body (the physical body) that arose and appeared to many after Jesus rose again! The bodily resurrection gives hope to us all. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." (1 Cor. 6:14).

A COMFORTING PROSPECT AWAITING US!

When Christ shall appear, graves will open on every hill and in every vale, and the sea will give up that committed to it! Since the spirit was not committed to the grave, there will be the emergence of the raised bodies which will outnumber the daisies in the Spring! "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thes. 4:15-18). Do we need more assurance that God will bring forth a bodily resurrection?

I can't contend that flesh and blood shall not enter the hereafter, for 1 Cor. 15:50 does not say that! All I know about the body that shall be

is what God has revealed. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 Jno. 3:2). Since it does not appear and has not been revealed what we shall be, shouldn't we allow God to give us a body as pleases Him? However, the notion that we shall no longer have our bodies is infidelic and faith-destroying! The Bible plainly and forcefully teaches that the body that is buried shall be raised again! We shall be like our Lord, and will "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." What glorious prospect!

Value of Discipline

Johnny Ramsey

The entire book of Proverbs, as well as choice New Testament references, tell us clearly the value of discipline in our lives. Why, then, is there such a void of this emphasis in our homes, society, schools and church? Answer: because it takes effort and we are lazy! Perhaps Heb. 12:11 says it best, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The Lord emphatically tells us, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). Paul wrote to brethren that we not only believe in the Lord, but we suffer for His cause (Phil. 1:29). Was not Paul himself told that he would be persecuted for the cause of Christ? "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Our reason Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was not removed was due to the spiritual refinement such tribulation would produce in a disciplined life of service (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

The psalmist wrote, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psa. 119:71) Job's growth in the spiritual realm was indicative of the value of the furnace of affliction (Job. 42:12). Parents who seldom, if ever, discipline their offspring have evidently forgotten these points. Congregations that refuse to practice church discipline clearly overlook the value of such action. Truly, church discipline is love in action! Though the context is different, the words of Charles Dickens fit here perfectly: "Discipline must be maintained."

The key to discipline in every area of life - home community, church, government--is for each person to discipline himself. But our

modern libertine society wars against this concept. We are taught via bombardment of advertising to pamper ourselves from the cradle to the grave. Satan has lots of helpers in his crusade to welcome the whole world to the gates of hell someday. And, since it takes no effort at all to go there, our soft age will be well represented along the highways of perdition! John Keats, who like Alexander the Great, died young because of his life style, wrote his own epitaph with these words: "O for a life of sensations rather than thoughts."

To be a disciple of the Lord, we must "continue in his word" (Jno. 8:31), "bear much fruit" (Jno. 15:8), "maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). Persecutions may come (Jas. 1:2), but this prepares us to grow stronger in the Lord and less enamored by earthly values (1 Tim. 4:12-16). A great gospel song tells this story:

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love."

We should never fear nor shun the effective power of discipline. The great enemy of our spiritual welfare is an almost universal disdain for the value of chastisement in any realm. Rom. 13:14 admonishes, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Instead, we should constantly strive to bring our lives into subjection to God (1 Cor. 9:27). There is depth and purpose in a well-ordered life! Disciplinary action was enjoined upon erring brethren so that their souls could be saved in the day of judgment (1 Cor. 5:5). When we learn to value our eternal destiny more than momentary ease, we will understand that passage better!

Our Children

Ken Tyler

"Children!" what a wonderful word! We are told in Psalm 127:3-5 ". . . children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them . . ." We see from these verses that children are a wonderful blessing which bring much joy to our lives. Jesus said, ". . . Except ye be converted, and

become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." On another occasion he said, ". . . Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3; 19:14). Jesus points out how beautiful and wonderful little children are.

All of us know that children grow up so fast. It seems that in a matter of no time they are teenagers; and then before you know it they have graduated from high school, and are gone from home! I think one of the greatest mistakes many of us make is not spending enough time with our children. We live in a hectic world, with great demands; and it seems there is just not enough time. Too often the family is neglected. I am convinced this is one of the main reasons divorce has grown in leaps and bounds the last few years. Families do not have (or take) time for one another. The children suffer, and the marriage relationship suffers.

I don't know what the answer is to your particular situation, but let me stress one thing:--don't neglect your children. Spend as much time with them as you possibly can. Don't miss their birthday parties; take them fishing; support them at school and in their recreational activities. Our children need us. Soon those 18 years will be gone. I hope we won't look back and say, "Why didn't I spend more time with my children?" The story is told of a little fellow who returned home from school and visited his father in the workshop. His dad gave him a piece of gum, and told him to run on. Later he came back, and his father gave him a quarter, a third time he returned and his dad snapped, "Son, I gave you gum and 25 cent; what more do you want?" The little boy replied, "Daddy, I want You."

May we never forget that it takes time to be a parent, to mold character, to build a boy or girl.

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