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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father"

Now who made the above statement? Christ, evidently. He said this in Mark 13:32. Reading through this setting, we find the disciples of the Lord showing Him the temple buildings of the Jews and admiring its great structure. Jesus saw that was the most appropriate time to tell the disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews, including the great temple buildings; which was to take place in their life time, in 70 A.D. So He said to them, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Mark 13:2). The disciples thought that Christ was telling them about the end of the world, when he would come, when every-thing will be destroyed. So they asked the Lord, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4). According to Matthew 24:3, they had asked the Lord, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" Reading through the whole story in this setting, we find that the Lord did give them many signs about the time when He would come to judge the Jewish nation of that age and how Jerusalem would be destroyed, in

fact, He told them some very specific things about this coming destruction upon the holy city of the Jews; because of their unfaithfulness to Him. He even employed highly apocalyptic language to warn His followers of the coming disaster; and all of that was fulfilled when it actually did take place in A.D. 70.

But in replying to their second question, that is, "What will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age?" Christ told them, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." How different it is, what Christ said then, from what men teach today? They have been setting dates and times of His coming, and thus deceiving millions of people all over the world. People! Don't listen to such false teachers anymore! When Christ Himself said that the angels in heaven do not know when he will come back; and He Himself did not know about it, as He had emptied Himself of His privileges in becoming man for saving man from sin. (Philippians 2:7). How then anyone on earth can predict about the time of His coming? Such people are liars, and all liars, according to Revelation 21:8, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and the same will be true of those who love to hear a lie and believe it and practice it. (Revelation 22:15).

Let me remind you further what the Bible teaches on this subject of the second coming of Christ. Jesus made the statement, in Matthew 24:36-39: "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, SO ALSO WILL THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE." The apostles Paul wrote: "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace, and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3).

According to Acts 17:30, 31, God want all people everywhere to repent and submit to His will, because Lord Jesus Christ will come one day to judge the whole world in righteousness. But when will He come? of that day and hour no man knows.

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:13). Yes, we know that He is coming, but we do not know the day or the hour in which He is coming. He has not revealed that to man, rather, He chose not to reveal that to man, because He want us to be ready, prepared to meet Him, when He comes back.

The Resurrection of Christ

J.C. CHOATE

Salvation, the church, and Christianity rest on the foundation of the resurrection of Christ. Although the enemies of Christ reject this great event in history, there are many evidences which proclaim it to be fact rather than myth.

After Jesus had driven out of the temple those who were selling animals and the money changers, the Jews asked for a sign to prove His authority for doing such things. The record then says, "*Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up: Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*" (John 2:19-22).

After Lazarus had died, and Jesus went to Martha and Mary, Martha said to Jesus that if He had been there her brother would not have died. Jesus responded by saying that her brother would rise again, but Martha thought he was talking only about the resurrection in the last day. We then read, "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*" (John 11:25, 26) Then Jesus went to the tomb and proceeded to raise Lazarus from the grave.

In the latter chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we read of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. This is surely the greatest story in history. It is also the saddest, because even though Christ lived a sinless life and did good only, still the

religious leaders of the day schemes and worked until He was betrayed by Judas, given a false trial, and then was crucified upon the cross. They thought the end of the story would be His burial in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. But this story ends in victory since Christ was resurrected from the grave on the third day, even as he said he would be. We read, *"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lighting, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keen did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."* (Matthew 28:1-7).

Now at the time of Jesus' burial, the chief priests had gone to Pilate, urging that guards be placed at the tomb to make sure that no one could steal away the body of Jesus, for they said, *"Sir, we remember that while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise'."*

But as the first day of the week began to dawn, *"... behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it . . . And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men"* (Matthew 28:2, 4).

When they had recovered from their fear, they went to report to the chief priests all that had happened. The guards were given large sums of money and told to say that the disciples had come and stolen his body away while they were asleep. They were assured that if word came to the governor's ears about these matters that the chief priests would persuade him and secure him.

What an unbelievable story to tell! Whoever had heard of Roman guards falling asleep while on duty and being excused to live to tell about it? It was well-known Roman law that if a guard allowed his prisoner to escape, he paid with his own life. But the chief priests could not bear to admit that Jesus had actually been

resurrected, so they resorted to bribery of the guards and the creation of the lie that the disciples, themselves, had stolen Jesus' body, regardless of the story that was told by the enemy then, and that is still told by the enemy today, Jesus indeed was resurrected from the grave.

For forty days, Jesus appeared at different times to the Apostles and to other disciples. There were many witnesses of His resurrection. First, He was seen by the women who came to the tomb, then by the two men on the road to Emmaus, and by the Apostles. (Acts 1:21). The record says, further, "*And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred at once; of whom the greater part remain unto 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 [Paul] also, as of one born out of due season.*" (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

Just before the Lord's Ascension to heaven, He met with the Apostles and asked them to remain in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high. From there they would preach the Gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection, first in Jerusalem, then in Judaea, Samaria, and finally to all the world. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15, 16).

While they waited in Jerusalem, choice was made among the disciples of one to take the place of Judas. The qualification stated that an apostle must be *an eyewitness from the Baptism of John till the resurrection of Jesus*. Matthias was chosen and numbered with the eleven. After receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles began to preach that God had raised up Jesus (Acts 2:24; 29-32). As a result some 3,000 believed that He was truly the resurrected Lord. They obeyed God, being baptized into the death of Christ and resurrected to walk a new life (Romans 6:3, 4) and God added them to the church. (Acts 2:37-47).

One of the strongest cases for the resurrection of Christ is Paul. Here was a man—Saul, as he was called then—who persecuted the church in the Jerusalem area, and then got permission from the High Priest to go to Damascus to find Christians, both men and women, to bind them and bring them back to Jerusalem to be persecuted. (Acts 9). As he and his companions traveled to Damascus, the Lord appeared to Saul and asked, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" (Acts 9:4)

Saul asked, "*Who are You, Lord?*" (v. 5), and the reply was, '*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*' Then Saul asked, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (v. 6). Jesus commanded him to go into the city and there he would be told what he should do. Saul arose and went, a changed man. Before, he had breathed out threatening and slaughter against the church. Now he was blind, and he spent the next three days fasting and praying. By the Lord's instructions, Ananias came to Saul and asked him to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). He did so, and immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues, ". . . *that He is the Son of God*" (v. 20). Saul, known now as Paul, became a great worker in the kingdom and eventually died a martyr's death for Christ.

But what brought about such a great change of heart and life? Even though Paul had persecuted the church, he had done it out of ignorance, evidently thinking that Christ was an impostor, a threat to the religion of God. But when the Lord appeared to him, suddenly Saul realized that *Christ was alive*, that the resurrection claimed by the Apostles and denied by the chief priests had actually occurred! Saul then turned to the Lord and preached him as a resurrected Savior for the rest of his life. He was willing to give up all of the praise and honour he had been receiving from the Jews to do this. Surely he would not have made such a change if he had not been convinced beyond any doubt that Christ had been resurrected. Such a changed life, and Paul's Willingness to die for his faith, are the strongest evidence possible to prove that Christ indeed came forth from the grave to live forevermore.

The gospel itself is the *death, burial, and resurrection of Christ*, as Paul proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. He also says that this is good news. (Romans 10:13-15). In our obedience to that gospel, we picture the Lord's *death, burial, and resurrection* as we *die to our sins*, we are *buried in the waters of baptism*, and then we *come forth from that watery grave to walk in newness of life*. Read Romans 6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Also, as Christians, we meet each first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7), and in so doing we remember the Lord's *death, burial, and resurrection* as we partake of the *Lord's Supper*. (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). We partake of the bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and all of His

suffering on the cross, and then we partake of the fruit of the vine, the cup, in remembrance of His blood that was shed on the cross that we might live. Of course all of this is meaningful only because of the Lord's resurrection. Through obedience to Him and through partaking of His Supper, we are telling the world that we believe in the Lord's death, burial and resurrection and that He lives today and forevermore.

Finally, because of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, there is the promise that all will be resurrected in the last day. Jesus said, "*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*" (John 5:28, 29).

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul talks at length about the resurrection, assuring us that in our own resurrection we will be like Jesus in that we will have a spiritual body. At that time if we have been judged to be faithful to the Lord, we will go to heaven to live with Him forevermore.

Do you believe in the resurrection of Christ?

Especially for Women

"Church Doctrine"

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Andrew and Rachel had never worshipped together. Since their marriage in the large St. Mary's building, they had used Sunday as their day to catch up on washing and cleaning at him. It seemed strange to go to be going to a place of worship instead.

They reached the building early, finding only the priest there. After introducing themselves, Andrew began, "I am Catholic, and Rachel is Baptist. We want to bring up our son in the right way so we've been reading the Scriptures, and there are some questions we'd like to ask."

"Have you come to have your son christened?" asked the priest.

"Christened?" asked Rachel. "We haven't read about that in the Bible. In Acts 2, when the church was started, people were baptized, and they were adults—people who were old enough to believe in Jesus and to decide what they should do. We want to do the same thing they did."

The priest smiled kindly. "But many things have changed since that simple beginning. There is much church doctrine, spoken by the Popes through the centuries, and these things must be considered as well as the Bible."

"I am puzzled," Rachel said. "We have a concordance, listing the words in the Bible. Why is the Catholic church not listed there?"

"You must realize that the Holy Mother Church was started in those early days, with Peter being the rock on which it was built. He was the first Pope, the head of the church in Rome."

"You're saying that Peter was the rock—not Jesus? And Peter was the head of the church?" asked Andrew.

"Oh, yes!" the priest assured them.

"What does a person need to do in order to be saved from his sins?" asked Rachel.

"Salvation has its beginning in christening, as holy water is put on the baby's head, and he is dedicated to God. When he is older he goes through catechism—classes to train him in the doctrines of the church. Then he is confirmed and can partake of the Eucharist. He has become a part of the 'Mother church.' Of course there are many doctrines concerning life and worship and death, penance, purgatory, sainthood, praying to the saints, special Masses, confessionals—all of these you will learn in time."

Others began to arrive. "Good morning, Father," they said, greeting the robe-clad priest. It was very strange to Rachel to sit in the auditorium and watch the ritual of people going to the altar underneath the statue of Mary, lighting candles, making "the sign of the cross," and praying to Mary. The service, too, was ritualistic with a great deal of procession and ceremony. Most interesting was the "eucharist," the Catholic version of the last supper Jesus had with His disciples. The priest placed a thin wafer on the tongues of the members, one by one, and blessed them.

Waiting until all others had gone, at the end of the service, Andrew approached the priest again. "Sir," he began—

"You should address me as 'Father', showing the proper respect," the priest interrupted.

"I am sorry, I mean no disrespect. But I don't understand some of the things. Why did the people light candles and pray to an image of Mary? She was not God. Are we really supposed to worship humans?"

"You question the worship of our Mother Mary?" asked the priest incredulously. "We pray, 'Holy Mary, Mother of God'—"

"But, sir, she wasn't *God's mother*," objected Rachel. "She called herself the handmaid of God—His servant for His use!"

"You are not understanding the doctrine of the church," the priest answered.

"Sir, you mentioned 'purgatory,'" Andrew said. "What is that?"

"That is the place of the dead—not hell, but a place of torment, to purge the sins of the people. One's friends and relatives can pay money and pray for the soul, and according to the sins to be covered, after these prayers and payments he can be released to go to heaven. There are many doctrines of the church—very important doctrines. You must not question what has been fixed by the Popes and the councils through the ages."

At home again, lunch finished and Timothy settled for his nap, Andrew and Rachel talked about the morning's experiences. "I don't understand," Rachel said, "if the church belongs to Jesus, why would Peter have been the foundation and head of it? Just like it says here in Matthew 16:18, it stands or falls on whether or not Jesus actually was the Son of God."

"Let's look up some of these key words in the concordance and see what we can find in other places," suggested Andrew. "Maybe 'built' would have something . . . Yes, look up Ephesians 2:20, Rachel."

"Verse 19 begins the sentence: '*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.*' There's a center-column reference in the Bible beside 'foundation'—in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.*"

"There are several places in the concordance about Jesus being the head of the church: in Ephesians 1:22 the list says, '*... gave Him to be head over all things ...*'; 4:15 says, '*... which is the head, even Christ ...*'; 5:23: '*... as Christ is head of the church ...*'; Colossians 1:18: '*He is head of the body, the church ...*' None of these verses say anything about Peter being the head of the church, and they don't talk about a 'Pope', either," Andrew reasoned. "And if Christ is the foundation and the head of His church, and if He decided what His church was to be and do in the beginning, I don't believe any group of men should have developed 'church doctrines' that are different from the things taught in the New Testament."

"What he said about salvation was not at all what the apostles preached on the day the church was begun," Rachel said. "Did you check to see if 'purgatory' is in the concordance, and what the Bible says about that?"

"It isn't there," Andrew said, "and neither is 'catechism'."

"Another thing bothers me, Andrew, I remember from the Bible stories when I was a child that God said His people were never to worship idols. Some of their biggest problems came because of idolatry. *It can't be right to have statues of Mary and Jesus and the apostles and other people, and to worship them and pray to them!* I know that's idolatry, and God said He is the only God and no images were to be made."

"I just remembered something else," Andrew exclaimed, turning through the concordance and then the Bible. "Last night I read this that Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 23:9: '*Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*'"

"There are so many differences between what we are reading in the Bible and what the priest said today," Rachel commented. "What can we do?"

"We'll continue to study, even about the things he said, because we don't want to judge something wrong out of our lack of understanding. But, already, some points seem clear: if we want to be in the Catholic church, we should be christened as babies, then go through their catechism. If we want to be added by God to Jesus' church, we have to do what those people did: believe the message, repent, and be baptized. Then God will save us, because He said He would do that."

To be Continued . . .

Do We Impress People ?

FRANCIS DAVID

We read in the Bible that Pharisees were very religious people. They studied the scriptures very well and performed their religious acts promptly and regularly. They were very strict in their day today religious activities. But the same Bible tells us that inspite of their religious life still Jesus had to condemned them. A number of times he even had to rebuked them. You might wonder why Jesus did this kind of thing. We find the reason in the scriptures that Jesus could not tolerate their hypocrisy and therefore he had to rebuked them. Pharisees were preaching and teaching people that they should do this and that but they themselves were not practising the same. If you have a Bible or a New Testament I would request you to read the entire chapter of Mathew 23. Jesus says: "Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat." Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; **FOR THEY SAY, AND DO NOT DO.**" For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. "But all their works **THEY DO TO BE SEEN BY MEN.** They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments." Here we see as we go on and read this chapter that whatever these people were doing religiously, they were impressing people and were not pleasing God. All their religious acts were just outward and not from the heart and mind.

We as Christians, children of God sometimes behave in the same manner. Don't we sometime do our religious acts just to impress people around us? Once our Lord was talking to people on a mountain side and while speaking he said "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your father in heaven. (Mathew 6) He further said that when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. If we act in the same manner as Pharisees did then our religious life will be worthless. God would not be pleased with this. Infact, he would not accept this kind of service from us.

As Christians, we do many things to please our God. We

worship God in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:24). When we worship him we do all the acts in worship to please him and not to impress people. Bible commands us to sing praises to God. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) We sing because we want to praise him, and our singing comes from the heart and mind. How do we sing? Do we sing to impress people? A person might be a good singer or a good song director but he should always keep in mind that while singing he is praising God and not impressing people around him. If our intention is to impress people then our singing would be worthless.

What about prayer? Prayer is a special privilege for Christian to talk to God. We all need to pray. Bible says that we should pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17). How do we pray? Do we pray sincerely to God knowing him as our father in heaven. Pharisees were very regular in prayers but they had a problem and the problem was that most of the time they will impress people with their prayers.

Jesus gave some instructions regarding prayer in Mathew chapter 6, and he said like this "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the Synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men (Mt. 6:5). When we pray to God we must realise that we are before the almighty, and we must pray to him with all humility. We must thank him for all the blessings which he showers upon us. Often it is seen that some people while praying in the congregation try to use big impressive words, which is not right. When we pray in the congregation, let us try to be simple and specific. Jesus taught his disciples to pray by precept and examples. While praying let's not impress people that how intelligent we are. This kind of attitude is not acceptable to God. Let us be humble and learn from our Lord how to pray acceptably. (Luke 18:9-14).

Christians remember the Lord's death by partaking the Lord's Supper. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and he left a memorial for us so that we should not forget his death. A true Christian will not try to miss this supper because he knows from the heart the worth of Jesus's death. We as Christians, do we really appreciate his death on the cross of calvary? The Bible tells us that disciples came together to break bread on the first day of the week. (Acts. 20:7). After becoming Christians, many do not take it seriously and very frequently they will miss the

worship or the Lord's supper. While taking part in the Lord's supper we are proclaiming Christ's death. We should keep in mind that we are taking part in this supper because our Lord had commanded us this, and not to impress people. We know its worth. Its not a ritual (Read I Cor. 11:23-28).

What about our giving. In the old testament we read, people use to give their offerings for His cause. We as Christians we give our offering to further the cause of Christ. We need to take the gospel, the good news to the world and for this work funds are needed. All Christians are commanded to give from their incomes, as they have been prospered. (I Cor. 16:2). Do we give our offering to please God or men. How do we give. Lets give more and more so that the gospel could be taken to more areas. Let us give not to impress people but to impress God.

Our God knows our hearts. He is aware of our all actions. We cannot hide ourselves from him. Lets be the kind of people who please God by their actions. We please God and not man.

The Only Means of Defeating the Devil

GARY C. HAMPTON

There can be no doubt in the minds of right thinking people that Satan is alive and well today. All around us there is violence and wickedness. Senseless acts have been displayed in all our living rooms by the means of television news. Some have begun to question the power or effectiveness of Christianity to meet the challenge. Others ask why those who believe in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God have failed to reach more with the truth. Why has society been more influential in the church than the church has in society? Why have so many sinners not come to the light?

Unity

The answer rests in one simple, powerful, deadly word, division. The religious world is obviously divided and that division proclaims to the unbelievers a confusion which cannot have originated from the Author of peace. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about their assemblies for the exercising of the spiritual gifts, he told them "the spirits of the prophets are subject

to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:32-33).

The only solution to the problem of division is unity. Right thinking, God fearing people must call for a unity of believers under the banner of Christ if we are to help effect any changes in the world around us. In the final hours before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed to his Father in behalf of his disciples. He asked that God would keep them from the evil one, or devil. Then he said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21). If we are to bring the world to Christ, we must have unity. How can that unity be achieved?

A Common Source of Instruction

First, we must have a common source of instruction. Jesus stated, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Since Jesus words will serve as the basis of judgment, they are the best possible source of instruction. Those words can be found in the accounts of his life recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In fact, when he wrote the book of Acts, Luke said, "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). So, Jesus' teaching is clearly in the first four books of the New Testament.

However, we also need to realize the rest of the New Testament contains the words of Christ as well. Jesus told his disciples the Holy Spirit would teach them "all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." Later, he again emphasized that role for the Spirit when he said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak: and He will tell you things to come" (John 14:26; 16:13). If we would be acceptable workers in the sight of God, we must study all the New Testament and work with all our might to pursue the course outlined for us there.

There Is Only One Faith

It is common to hear someone say, "Well, you have your

faith and I have mine, but we are all going to the same place anyway." Yet, the apostles of Christ did not speak of a multitude of faiths. Inspired men like the apostle Paul plainly said there is one faith (Ephesians 4:5). Jude wrote encouraging his first century readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). At the end of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas "returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:21-22). Paul told the Roman brethren about the "word of faith which we preach" and urged the Corinthians to "stand fast in the faith" (Romans 10:8; 1 Corinthians 16:13).

The apostles and inspired writers spoke of a faith which was the sum of everything believed and held in common by all who followed Christ. It was not flexible. Instead, it was a standard by which all followers of Christ would measure themselves. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves; that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). Our plea is that all religious people who would see an end to the division would return to the New Testament as our common source for instruction and cling to the faith so that we might, with God's help, defeat the devil!

Bible Interpretation of John 3:5

DILLARD THURMAN

Few passages have been bandied about more than the teaching of Jesus on the new birth, found in the third chapter of John. Many who have had "dry cleaning courses" in seminaries refuse this teaching just as completely as though Jesus never spoke! This shows to what extent a depraved mind will go to refuse the plain words of the Lord.

Jesus told Nicodemus, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). Now, whether or not we understand what Jesus meant, we should readily agree that He

meant what He said! And if we thus first will accept His authority without question, we will then have no trouble understanding His words. Of a truth, Jesus phrased this truth in the simplest terms, using two elements that should be understood by all. Any Bible student should know what *"the Spirit"* is, and certainly and shall know what *"water"* is. And Bible scholars, regardless of religious affiliation, have universally understood that Jesus was teaching of baptism. Therefore, this passage is misunderstood only when arrayed against human creeds and doctrines.

The Holy Spirit Moves Through the Word

We must recognize that God's word has always been delivered through and by the Holy Spirit. To this Peter gave clarity, saying, *"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Thus, we learn that every Old Testament passage was given by the Holy Spirit. Of Jesus it was said, *"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"* (John 3:34). This shows clearly that the Spirit inspired Him to set forth the word of God.

Jesus Christ showed the affinity of the Holy Spirit to the word of God in saying, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life"* (John 6:63). The word was Spirit-filled and directed. Jesus promised the apostles, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:26). When the gospel was first preached publicly, it is recorded, *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4). Luke speaks of those things which Jesus did, *"Until the day that he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen"* (Acts 1:1-2). The Spirit revealed the word of God to inspired men, and He moves and operates through that word to reach sinful man.

Water Requisitioned to Join the Word

But in this new birth there is another element. Jesus said, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* So, there must be the union of water

and the Spirit. Here is where water is requisitioned to join the word which the Spirit has delivered to be believed and obeyed. When one has believed in Jesus Christ as a result of hearing the word of God, the gospel of Christ, he is also led to obey his Lord in baptism in water. Jesus promised, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). No one who truly believes Jesus will balk at obeying Him in baptism. The result of the first public sermon, is recorded thus: *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"* (Acts 2:41). Why were they baptized? Because they had gladly received the word which the Spirit gave (Acts 2:4). Water was joined with the word that they might be added to the saved.

Baptism in water was always joined with faith in Christ which the word of God engendered in the hearts for the unsaved. Look to Samaria: *"Then Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them . . . But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women"* (Acts 8:5, 12). Later Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, who then asked, *"See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"* Philip answered that if he believed, he could be baptized: *"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him"* (Acts 8:35-38). Water was joined with the reception of the word; and the eunuch could then rejoice in forgiveness of sins. Peter preached to the household of Cornelius, and when they had believed the word, we read, *"Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized . . . and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"* (Acts 10:47-48). When Saul believed, the Lord sent Ananias to tell him, *"Now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). This combining of water and word is never more clearly shown than in Acts 18:8, *"And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."*

Clarifying the Union of Water and Word

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to*

himself a glorious church" (Eph. 5:25-27). Here is a complete commentary on John 3:5. All those in the church have been born of water and the Spirit—the *"washing of water with the word."* For more on this, turn to Rom. 6:3-4, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized in to his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

The word of God, given by the Spirit, imparts faith in Christ and leads one to repent (Acts 2:36-37). This is the death of the old man of sin. Faith then leads one to be baptized into Christ for remission of sins. This constitutes the burial and resurrection. A new life then ensues—by the union of water and the Spirit. Everyone who so obeys has been *"born of water and of the Spirit,"* and thus enters the kingdom of God and lives a new life in Christ. But one must fully accept this to be in Christ. For until he has entered Christ by baptism (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), he has not come into salvation which is found only in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).

Born Into the Family of God

When one has been *"born of water and of the Spirit,"* he enters into the family of God. It is this divine relationship to which Paul refers in Eph. 3:14-15, *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."* One can enter this family only by the new birth set forth by our Lord in John 3:5. Just how this is accomplished is stated clearly in Gal. 3:26-27, *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* This new relationship results in a new life: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). All who have been *"born of water and of the Spirit"* have entered this divine family over which God is Father.

Becoming a Member of the Household

In another figure of speech, we are said to be of the household of God. *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him, that we may be*

also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17). *"God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father"* (Gal. 4:4-6). Our entry into this sacred household is because we have been *"born of water and of the Spirit."* As Paul wrote, *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"* (Eph. 2:19). Paul refers to *"the household of faith"* in Gal. 6:10. The reason? They had been *"born of water and of the Spirit"* and thus composed this great household of God.

Citizenship in the Kingdom of God

This new birth puts one into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Paul speaks of God, *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Col. 1:13). Those who are *"born of water and of the Spirit"* enter into the kingdom of God, for He puts them there! This caused the inspired writer to exclaim. *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptable with reverence and godly fear"* (Heb. 12:28). That people were in that kingdom is verified by Paul in stating that some are his *"fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God"* (Col. 4:11). Surely those who have been *"born of water and of the Spirit"* enter this great kingdom.

A Member of the Body of Christ

This new birth also puts one into the body of Christ. *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:13). By the instruction of the Spirit through the word, we have believed in Christ and have then been baptized in water to enter the body of Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3). By this introduction, we become an integral part of the spiritual body of the Lord. *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"* (1 Cor. 12:27). The blessed estate of this body is seen in the words of the Spirit penned by Paul, *"Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body"* (Eph. 5:23). This relationship is further affirmed in Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 1:24.

Refuge in the Church of the Lord

When one is *"born of water and of the Spirit,"* he is brought into the body of Christ, being added to the church. The body is the church: *"He is the head of the body, the church"* (Col. 1:18; see also Eph. 1:22-23). When folk on Pentecost in Jerusalem heard the word preached by Peter, they asked, *"What shall we do?"* The Spirit, by Peter's mouth, told them, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:38). Three thousand *"received his word were baptized"* and were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:41, 47). The worth of this relationship can be ascertained from the reading of Eph. 5:25, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it."* Christ *"purchased the church"* with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Therefore, if I have respect for Christ's love and His blood, I cannot speak lightly of the church! Nor can I disparage that new birth that is necessary for entrance into the blessings which are found in the church.

After the rage of the skeptic and unbeliever has been expended against the words of Christ, the Lord still declares, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). It is not a question of not being able to understand what Jesus meant, for the Scriptures explain it thoroughly. It is matter of having such faith and trust in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, that you will gladly receive His word (Acts 2:41). Are you ready to truly believe in the Lord and then gladly render obedience to His will? To that end this article is dedicated.

Will The Ignorant Be Saved?

DAVID THURMAN

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). This verse clearly says that all men must repent. It doesn't offer any alternative to anyone, including those who might never hear the gospel message. The idea that ignorance will save alien sinners is not uncommon, but is it Biblical?

The first thing to realize is that it is not the absence of

preaching that condemns people, it is sin. "*The person who sins will die*" (Ezek. 18:20). "*The wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). "*There is none righteous, not even one . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:10, 23). The reason people are lost is their sinfulness and nothing else. As Jesus said, "*For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:17-18). The world was already judged and under condemnation when He got here. He came to offer a way out of sin and death.

This means that if we contend that ignorance will save, then some could be saved IN their sins and without the blood of Jesus. They could live in total depravity and error, never having one sin forgiven and still sit at the feet of God. The fact is, "*There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). If you are outside of Christ, you are condemned right now, because of your sin, not because you haven't heard of Jesus.

It might offend our sense of justice to think that it is unfair that people die spiritually without the chance to be saved. But we would not apply that anywhere else in life. You might not know that cigarettes are harmful, but you will still get cancer and maybe die, in spite of your ignorance. You might trust your neighborhood and leave your doors unlocked, never realizing one neighbor is a thief. Your ignorance will not protect you from being robbed. Ignorance will not protect us in school or the workplace, and we should not be surprised that it will not save us from our sin.

Finally, if ignorance of the grace of God could bring salvation, why send Jesus to die a horrible, painful, sin-filled death? If you and I could be right with God just by staying ignorant, why not just let us stay ignorant and let Jesus stay in heaven where He belongs? Jesus came and died, precisely because He didn't want us to be ignorant and He didn't want us to stay lost.

Right "Name" for the Church?

CLEM THURMAN

This is a great question, and it gets directly to the heart of undenominational Christianity. First, let me say just as "clearly" as I can, that there is no "name" given the church in the Bible! There are many terms applied to it, but no proper name is assigned. A proper name for anything, or anyone, excludes other terms. I am a writer, an editor, a preacher, a golfer, a husband—but none of those is my NAME. My name is "Clem Thurman." Other terms may describe me (see above), but those descriptions are not names. Now, the exact same principle is at work with regard to the church.

Jesus said, "*I will build my church*" (Matt. 16:18). That church is His, He built it. But "*My Church*" is not the name of it! Paul said, "*The church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28). But "*Church of the Lord*" is not the name of it. It is called "*church of God*" (1 Cor. 1:2) and "*church of the firstborn*" (Heb. 12:23), but neither is the "name" of the church. When my family named me "Clem Thurman" that became my name, and a name is exclusive. I am not Lute Thurman, nor Sanford, nor Guy, etc. All those are good names, but they are names given to other members of my family. They do not apply to me. A name is exclusive; when I became Clem Thurman, that ruled out being called by other names. The same principle is true with the church. If a proper name were given in the Scriptures, it would exclude other "names." But no such name is given to the church.

The terms applied to the church in the Bible are simply descriptive terms. That is, the terms describe whose church it is, what it is, or who is in it. Being called by Jesus, "*my church*," or called "*church of God*" or "*church of the Lord*" describes the ownership (authority, head) of the church. The expressions, "*church of God which is at Corinth*" (1 Cor. 1:2) and "*churches of Galatia*" (Gal. 1:2), indicate the locality of local churches. "*Church of the Thessalonians*" (1 Thes. 1:1), describes those who are in that church. But none of these terms is a NAME. They are descriptive terms.

It would be entirely proper to refer to any local group of

Christians by any scriptural term that properly defines who and what they are. Why do we usually refer to those with whom we are in fellowship as "*churches of Christ*"? The local congregation of believers (church) needs some term to identify it. The use of such a term is certainly scriptural, for the Scriptures use it (Rom. 16:16). But it is not an exclusive name. And the fact that there are other groups (teaching and practicing things that are not authorized by the Bible) using such scriptural terms as "Church of God" or "Church of the Firstborn" and others, forces us to use a different term which will identify us to the world. Interestingly, nearly all in the denominational world accept the fact that the term, "*churches of Christ*," is both a scriptural term and the best term to describe that church which Jesus built and to which He adds the saved.

You Can See Christ

GLENN COLLEY

That some would find it hard to follow a Savior they couldn't see is shown in Peter's book, 1 Peter 1:8 "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He leads and governs us with the New Testament which he left for us to follow. (Heb. 9:1-17).

It should be noted, however, that there is a sense in which we can see Christ today.

In Acts 9:4, when Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" How could Saul possibly persecute the Christ? Jesus had died and been resurrected to His Father in Heaven in Acts 1, and yet Jesus asks Saul why he is persecuting Him. The answer to this is simply found in Acts 8:3 where we read, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." The fact is, when Saul, or anyone else for that matter, hurts the people who wear Christ's name, they are hurting Christ.

There is such great security in knowing we serve a Lord who loves us this much. Even from heaven itself Jesus watches

us and knows us and cares. Consider Stephen as a case-in-point. We know that Jesus went to heaven, and took his honored place, sitting on the right hand of God. Colossians 3:1 says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." But in Acts 7, as Stephen's courageous character fueled his heart with a passionate sermon about the Savior, the people gnashed on him with their teeth and began picking up rocks. They were going to stone this man. Quick—look at Jesus. Notice His posture. Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," (Acts 8:56). Standing. Jesus was standing instead of sitting. He came to His feet in heaven as His servant Stephen prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice for his Lord.

We can also see Jesus when we care for and love Christians. The concept will be expressed in the judgement: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, 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. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," (Matthew 25:34-40). The teaching is too clear to miss. To see the face of our Lord we must only look as far as our brother or sister sitting next to us. Whatever kindness we show to them is being received by Christ. When we see their face, the face of our brethren in need, there is a sense in which we are seeing the lovely face of Jesus.

It's no wonder that the church is called the body of Christ, (Eph. 1:22,23). We are not just His friends, we are His body; and we can see Him today. As the old song says, "Does Jesus care? . . . I know He cares."

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