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EDITORIAL

"For We Have Seen His Star"

When Christ was born, dear reader, I want you to notice the fact that God had shown a sign up in the sky to lead the wise men from the east to Jerusalem where Christ was born. About this interesting incident thus we read in the second chapter of the book according to Matthew: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.'" Continuing, down in verses 9 & 10, we read, "When they heard the king, they departed, and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw THE STAR, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy."

The wise men had followed the star that God had provided them for locating the Christ, the King. They went all the way from the East to Jerusalem, keeping their eyes intact on that particular star that was of Christ and that was put there by God Himself! Of course, ladies and gentlemen, there were many many other stars too up there in the sky, but those were not special to them. They weren't concerned about any of them. To them all that mattered was "the star of Christ." They did not reason among themselves, saying, "A star is a star, and one star is as good as another, what is there in a particular star, let's follow any of them and we'll get there!" No, they didn't. To them the star of Christ was so very special and important that they went all the way, following that

one star, until they reached their destination, the King Christ. In accepting the star of Christ as their standard to reach Christ they had accepted God's authority. Isn't it a wonderful and most needed lesson for us all today?

Why there is so much diversity and confusion and division in the religious world today? The only obvious answer to that is that we have all not accepted God's standard. There is only one God. And he is the author of peace and not of confusion, according to 1 Corinthians 14:33. That one God is our spiritual Father. He has given us a book, the Bible, in which He has revealed His will for all men everywhere to be our standard of His authority. In this book our Father God has told us that He is the Creator of man; that through disobedience and sin man has separated himself from Him; that He has for our sins given His only begotten Son (His Word Who by His power became a man); Whom He allowed to die on the cross for the sins of the world as a propitiation for our sins. The Bible tells us that Christ, after His death was resurrected by the power of God and went back to the Father in Heaven. After His resurrection and before ascending into heaven, Christ had told His chosen disciples that All authority has been given to Him on earth and in heaven by the Father (Matthew 28:18). And, He said that they should go everywhere and preach His Good News of salvation to all men and command them to believe in Christ as their Saviour, and repent from all sins, and confess Him as the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit to be saved. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39).

Those who are thus saved from their sins, by faith in Christ and obedience to His commands; the Bible says, "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47). The Lord ADDS to the church all the saved ones. There is but only one church, according to God's book of authority. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22,23 & 4:4). The concept of so many different churches of different brands has its origin with men alone, and not with the God's book of authority. When are people going to heed Christ's warning of Matthew 15:13 wherein He said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted"?

Man might want to do thousands of things to please God and thus to have the desire of entering into the eternal life of His heavenly kingdom. But God has authorized only one way for all men to reach heaven. Christ Who has been given *all authority* spoke of only one way to heaven. He said, "Many will say to me (*on judgment day*), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name.

and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:22,23). These people were living in dreamland; they had the desire to go to heaven; they had wished to enter God's eternal kingdom; all their lives they had done what they had wanted to do to please God. They might have been nice and sincere people. But they were wrong! In what? Why? Hear Christ again. "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21).

To please God and to prepare ourselves to enter in His eternal and heavenly kingdom we MUST do the will of God; that which is written in His book. The star of our text was put by God in the sky to lead the wise men to Christ. The same God has given us on earth a book His Bible, in which are revealed the things that we must do to enter the eternal heavenly life. God has done His part. We must do our part. Amen.

"Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?"

J.C. CHOATE

Do you remember the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian in Acts 8? We are told that an angel of the Lord directed Philip to go out to a desert place, between Jerusalem and Gaza, to meet a man from Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority and treasurer of Queen Candace. We are further told that he was a religious man, had come to Jerusalem to worship, meaning that he was a Jewish proselyte, and was to his way home, and as he traveled in his chariot he was reading the book of Isaiah. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the Prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:29-31). Then the record says that he invited Philip to come into his chariot and sit with him. Going on, it says that Philip began at the same scripture that he was reading and he preached to him Christ. The result was that as they rode along in the chariot that they came to a certain water and the eunuch wanted to know if he could be baptized. Philip explained that he could if he believed with all his heart that Jesus Christ was the Son of

God. He said that he did and then they stopped the chariot and both went down into the water and he baptized him and then they both came up out of the water and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

You will note that even though this man was reading the scripture, Philip wanted to know if he understood what he was reading. That suggests that just because one reads the scripture that doesn't mean that he understands the meaning of it. That doesn't mean that one cannot understand it, but it may be that one can't understand it because he has been taught error and therefore he may have a lot of prejudice against the truth. There may also be other reasons, but in the case of the eunuch, he asked for help and Philip gave him the help he needed.

The fact is that God has spoken to us (Hebrews 1:1,2), has revealed his will in his word (John 17:17; Matthew 7:21), and wants us to read and study his word (2 Timothy 2:15) so that we may be able to understand his will and obey him. (James 1:22). If we do not know, or if we cannot understand his will, how can we obey him?

Christ commanded the apostles to take the gospel into all the world. (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:19,20). Why? So they might preach the gospel, that is, proclaim Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and to reveal the commands of the gospel that man might believe in the Lord and obey his will that he might be saved.

How can one believe in Christ if he doesn't know who Christ is? Paul says that faith comes by hearing (understanding) the word of God. (Romans 10:17). How can one repent, if he doesn't understand what repentance involves? Paul said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28), and so on with all of one's sins. How can one confess Christ if he is not aware of who Christ is or that he is to confess him? (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32,33). And how can one be scripturally baptized if he doesn't know what baptism is or the purpose of it? (Romans 6:13,4; Acts 2:38). Not only that, but how can one become a member of the Lord's church if he doesn't know anything about that church? (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Is it possible for one not to know what baptism is, and the purpose of baptism, and then later to discover that he was baptized scripturally? If so, we should immerse every person we can lay our hands on. Can one be scripturally baptized if he has not been taught that he must repent of his adultery, or any other sin. Or even if he has been taught that he must give up such sins, can he be scripturally baptized if he

refuses to do so? Is it possible for one to become a member of a denominational church and later to realize that he actually became a member of the Church of Christ? Can one worship God acceptably if he doesn't know what the Bible teaches about worship? Concerning these matters, and many others that might be included, does God overlook or condone man's response on the basis of ignorance? If so, why has he given us his word that we might know and understand his will? In that case, why even bother with teaching God's word?

No one cannot ignorantly and accidentally obey the gospel and become a member of the Lord's church. Neither can one be saved and added to the church without repenting of his sins regardless of what they are.

The Lord has given his will to us so that we may know it and understand it and comply with it. How can it be any other way?

Especially For Women

Security, Stability, Boundaries

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

At the time of creation God has said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . ." (Genesis 1:26) In 1 John 4:16 we are told, "God is love." The foundation of man's being, therefore is love and the need for love.

When a baby is born into the world, it is of critical importance that it be nourished with love. The mother who nurses it, who cares for its physical needs, who consoles it and comforts it is the first object of its love. The importance of this bonding between the mother and her baby cannot be over-emphasized. But as the baby grows physically it also understands more of what goes on around it, so other factors must be added to the atmosphere of love. There are two women who are neighbors. In the first home the mother practices calmness and control toward her family. She is a peace-maker, resolved not to be drawn into ugly quarrels with her husband or her in laws, and she is especially determined not to expose her baby to such family friction. She is a hard worker, keeping her little house orderly and looking for inexpensive ways to make it more pleasant and beautiful for her husband and baby.

She keeps little Sara clean and well fed. She has thrilled over new things Sara has learned, and she takes the time to help her learn, but she also is being careful to teach her boundaries of good behavior, even at such an early age. Sara is a happy, thriving baby.

In the second home, hot tempers are the rule of the day. The mother sulks after quarrels and sits around bemoaning her lot in life, refusing to spend her days keeping house and working for such an undeserving husband. To brighten up her thinking, she spends a lot of time reading magazines and gossiping with neighbors. Some days she should have washed clothes earlier because there are no clean ones for little Samuel. While she reads, she half-watches him crawling around in the garden. He cries a lot and that gets on her nerves. Sometimes she wishes she didn't have the continual responsibility of a baby. Or of a husband. In fact, she has decided that she may divorce him if he doesn't stop being so demanding of her. But she's not sure what will happen to Samuel then, because she won't be financially able to raise him. She is thinking she may send him to her parents, or to her husband's.

Even babies are quick to sense insecurity. Peace, tranquility, and calmness are vital, both in dealing with a young child and in dealing with people and events which are a part of his life. Parents who are in control create an aura of security for their children. In that atmosphere, money and possessions are not of great importance; the important thing is that the child feels protected and secure from the troubles of life.

Boundaries are another vital aspect of security for a child. By nature, it will try new behavior, subconsciously looking for approval or disapproval. When the parents enforce firm no's or smilingly encourage yes's, the child learns, "I can go this far, but no further." And he is secure in that knowledge.

The child who has found no boundaries, who throws temper tantrums in the floor, who hits at parents, who flies into rages in order to get his way, is a miserable child. He is likely to grow into a miserable adult, spoiled and doomed to many failures in life as his heritage from his negligent parents.

But the greatest devastation of all is the insecurity caused by parents who fuss and fight and separate repeatedly or finally get a divorce. Deep scars are made in the child's personality which will never be outgrown. Usually, children from broken homes learned all the wrong things about relationships, and their solution to life's challenges as they grow to adults is also fussing and fighting and divorce. Tragedy breeds tragedy, and there is not end.

Statistics say that the first two years are the most formative of a child's life. So, fathers and mothers, be warned: be sure that you give your babies the foundation of love they need so badly. Then add security and a stable home life, with well-defined boundaries so that they can grow into happy people.

Is He The Reason For The Season?

BILL BRANDSTATTER

Many in the religious world will be celebrating the 25th day of December as the birthday of Jesus Christ. Manger scenes will abound around many church buildings. Songs about Jesus in the manger, the shepherds and the wise men will be heard during the Christmas season. Signs outside some church buildings may be seen stating such things as "Let's Keep Christ in Christmas" or "He's The Reason For The Season". Christ, however is not "the reason for the season". Man is. The Bible is void of references to any annual celebration of the birth of Christ, or the "season" in which he was born. Man, not God, invented the holiday known as "**Christmas**".

The term "**Christmas**" is not found in Holy Writ. There is not even a mention of the principle found therein. There is no indication of the date of his birth, and to attempt to provide such amounts to the same thing as attempting to set a date for his second coming. Although man is fond of celebrating birthdays, such does not justify doing so with the birth of Christ. In the long ago, Isaiah penned these words of God, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). Any such date set by man is pure speculation. The term "**Christmas**", according to history, was coined from the 12th century practice of **Christes Masse** (**Mass of Christ**). The earliest evidence for a celebration of Christ's birth comes from the time of the Roman emperor Commodus, around A.D. 188.

The feast of Christ's birth was first found in Rome at the time of "bishop" Liberius. It was made official by his decree in A.D. 354. So, for many years the world had no heard of such a celebration. For over 200 years such was unknown to the church. Now, however, it is commonplace among the religious world.

The scriptures provide mankind with "ALL THINGS that pertain unto LIFE and GODLINESS" (II Pet. 1:3). Thus, if the celebration of the

birth of Christ pertained to either "life" or "godliness", God would have included it in his revealed word. Therefore, to add a religious significance to the birth of Christ with a religious celebration of the same is to be guilty of adding to God's word, which is sinful (Rev. 22:18). Since all things pertaining to life and godliness have been provided, man's additions are neither needful nor acceptable. Paul wrote, "WHATSOEVER ye do in word OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS" (Col. 3:17). Doing things "in the name of the Lord" means doing things (all things) by his authority. Since his authority (his word) is void of directives for celebrating his birth in a religious setting, to do so is to practice that which is an addition and, thus, a violation of that word. When one does such, he rests under the condemnation of God. Is the New Testament your authority in matters religious?

Is Your House Covered By The Blood?

EDDY GILPIN

Just prior to his bringing the tenth and final plague upon the land of Egypt, God gave unto Moses instructions for the observance of the Passover (Ex. 12). The true significance of this feast was not realized until Christ, "our passover", was crucified on the cross (1 Cor. 5:7). The blood of that paschal lamb was to be placed upon "the lintel and the two side posts" of every house (Ex. 12:22). When accomplished, that house would be protected from "the destroyer" as he passed through the land bringing death to the firstborn of each household not covered by the blood (Ex. 12:23). In like manner, the blood of Jesus must be applied to every soul who would be protected from "the wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23). In consideration, then, of these matters, the question might be asked, "Is your house covered by the blood?"

The husband and father is to be the head of the house (Eph. 5:23,24). This does not mean that the man is better or has more favor in the eyes of God. Someone had to fill this role and task of being the head over the house, and God chose the man to fill that position. However, along with this position comes great and grave responsibility. The man is to be the spiritual leader in his home. He is to be careful that his children are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of this Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In light of this command, it should be asked of every father, "Is your house covered by the blood?"

Example is a strong teacher, either for good or bad. Influence is so powerful that it even continues after one has departed the ways of this life (Heb. 11:4). Fathers, is this example and influence for good present in your homes? Are you yourself a faithful member of the body of Christ, and thus "covered by the blood"? If not, how can you expect your children to become such or be such? The poet has said it thus:

"WALK A LITTLE PLAINER, DADDY"

Walk a little plainer, Daddy,
Said a little boy so frail;
I'm following in your footsteps,
And I don't want to fail.
Sometimes your steps are very plain
Sometimes they are hard to see;
So walk a little plainer, Daddy,
For you are leading me.
I know that once you walked this way,
Many years ago;
And what you did alone the way
I'd really like to know.
For sometimes when I am tempted,
I don't know what to do;
So walk a little plainer, Daddy,
For I must follow you.
Some day when I am grown up,
You are like what I want to be;
Then I will have a little boy,
Who will want to follow me.
And I would want to lead him right,
And help him to be true;
So, walk a little plainer, Daddy,
For we must follow you

—Author Unknown

Yes, fathers your example and influence will continue on for years to come. The way you rear your children will determine to a great extent how they will rear theirs. Is the Lord a part of your own personal life? If so, how big a part is he? Can your children see that you are governed by the spiritual standards contained in God's word? Do they see you studying the Bible, praying and leading the home in matters spiritual? These are sobering questions to which each father needs to give close attention. Every father owes his children this kind of foundation. It is a

basic responsibility that God has given to him, and a command by which he will be judged. Fathers, give serious consideration to these things, and make sure that your house is "covered by the blood".

Conversion Is Not Mysterious

BENNIE FORISTER

Conversion is not some miraculous, better-felt-than-told process. Turning to God is something that people can understand, understand alike, and readily obey. God gave man his Word which gives him "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3). The scriptures tell mankind what to do in order to be saved from sin and its wages (Rom. 6:23). The scriptures nowhere teach that the Holy Spirit comes directly into a sinner's heart to convert him independent of his own will. The inspired apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Thus, the gospel and not "direct operation" is God's power unto salvation.

Conversion demands change. The necessary changes through which one goes in the process of conversion to Christ are three. They are: 1) A change of heart (mind); 2) A change of life; 3) A change in relationship. Let us notice each of these in the conversion process.

Since Christianity is a religion that involves the heart, a change of heart must occur in conversion. The heart, as the Bible often uses the word, refers to the mind (i.e. the part of man that thinks, reasons, believes, understands, desires, trusts, purposes and obeys). For example, in Matthew 9:4 the Bible says, "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, 'Wherefore think ye evil IN YOUR HEARTS?'" In Romans 10:1, Paul stated that his "HEARTS desire and prayer to God" was that Israel might be saved. Other passages revealing what the heart actually does are: Romans 10:10, Mark 2:6, Matthew 13:15, Proverbs 3:5, II Corinthians 9:7, Romans 6:17, and others. Thus, it is the mind of man, and not the physical heart, which must be changed in conversion. This change takes place through faith, which comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).

After one's confidence and trust in Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord have been established through hearing the gospel, his life needs to be reformed. One's faith in Christ should lead to such reformation. It should cause him to turn from sin to doing that which is lawful and right

(Ezek. 18:5-32). This change in conduct is brought about through repentance. Repentance is a change of mind or will regarding sin, which is produced by godly sorrow (II Cor. 7:10) which results in a reformation of life. Hence, the sinner must resolve to turn and travel in the opposite direction concerning sin and the love thereof.

Having destroyed the love and practice of sin by faith and repentance, one must then have his state or relationship changed. This relationship is changed through baptism, which is preceded by one's confession of his faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10). Paul declared, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST were baptized into 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" (Rom. 6:3,4). Although one's desires and directions of life are changed by faith and repentance, it takes the consummating act of baptism to change one's relationship with God. The penitent believer is baptized into Christ and thus become a new creature, a Christian (II Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13, 14). Hence, conversion is a process which can be known and obeyed by man. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ?

Are We Spectators?

ALLEN WEBSTER

A spectator is "one who looks on or watches" (*Webster's* 1132). We are all spectators in some ways as we enjoy watching sporting events or fashion shows. But one place where we are not to be mere onlookers is our Christianity. Elijah, facing Jews who were nothing more than religious spectators, said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. *And the people answered him not a word*" (I Kgs. 18:21). We must be careful that we are always "participants" and not "spectators".

ARE YOU A SPECTATOR IN WORSHIP? Worship, as a part of speech, is usually a verb and each act requires mental energy. Jesus commanded His followers to worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). When songs are led, do you listen or sing? When the lesson is preached, do you study or daydream? When the plate is passed, do you participate or spectate? For worship to be worthy of God's good pleasure, it demands our best (Mal. 1:13).

ARE YOU A SPECTATOR IN SERVICE? Each Christian is to be active in serving others (Gal. 5:13). When the sick and bereaved are announced, do you pray for them, send cards, offer encouraging words and/or made visits? These things show our love to the world (Jn. 13:34-35).

ARE YOU A SPECTATOR IN SOUL WINNING? Is teaching the lost something "they" are supposed to be doing rather than something in which "I" am interested? The command to "teach all nations" was not just given to preachers and elders, but all men (Mt. 28:19).

There is much work, to be done. Find your place in the Lord's church, roll up your sleeves and help fight the Lord's battles till He calls His army home!!

Where God Put Water

ROY J. HEARN

If one is a professed believer and follower of Christ, he is obligated to obey the Lord's every command without question, for Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18) and to reject His word is to disrespect and reject Him (John 12:48). We too often try to please ourselves instead of God. Though God has given an unalterable plan of salvation (Revelation 22:18,19), we are inclined to change or set aside His laws and expect Him to save us anyway. The Bible teaches that only the obedient have any promise of salvation. Therefore, it is imperative we obey God's laws implicitly.

There is much opposition to water in the plan of salvation. Why say so much about water? It is a most important item. Without it physical life could not exist. In the Bible God connects it with all kinds of purification. Peoples' minds have been disturbed and perverted about it, thus need to be taught the truth concerning water in God's plan. The New Testament teaches there is not salvation without it. Study the Bible to learn what God says about it. In this study the reader will note that God placed water *between* man and certain blessings, and the blessings were not received until the water was crossed. We agree that one is saved by God's power; but how does God exercise this power? God exercises His power through His will, His word, His law or covenant. Consider the following examples, note *where God put water* and when the blessing was received.

1. *Between Noah and the purified world, or salvation.* It is true

Noah was saved by faith (Hebrews 11:7), an active faith that led him to obey God's commands (Genesis 6:9, 20). If Noah had not obeyed and built the ark he would have also been destroyed. He was also saved by water (1 Peter 3:20). The flood stood between him and the purified state. He was lifted by the water, which destroyed the sinful people, and by it was transported to the purified world. Thus the sinner is now saved by baptism, in which his sins are destroyed by the blood of Christ, and he is transported by baptism into Christ, or the purified state (1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:27).

2. *Between Israel and deliverance from bondage.* The Israelites were in Egypt, typical of sin. They were pursued by Pharaoh, typical of the devil. They came to the Red Sea, but salvation from Egyptian bondage was beyond the sea. The Red Sea is typical of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1,2). The people were not delivered from bondage until they crossed the sea. Just so now, the sinner is not purified of sin until he crosses the water of baptism, which brings him into Christ where salvation is (Romans 6:3,4; Ephesians 1:7).

3. *Water placed between Naaman and cleansing* (2 Kings 5). Naaman had leprosy. God placed water between him and healing of this dread disease. Naaman didn't like it. He is typical of those who now reject God's remedy (Isaiah 55:8,9). Naaman wanted to do it his way, instead of God's; but the Lord did not change His word to please Naaman; he had to obey whether or not it suited him. Leprosy is typical of sin. Just as Naaman had to dip in obedience to God's command to be healed, so the sinner must "dip," or be baptized as God commands to be saved from sin. Was the power of cleansing in the water? No, but with God, who cleanses and forgives when we obey His command to be baptized.

4. *Christ put water between the blind man and sight* (John 9). Could not Christ have given this man sight without having him wash his eyes in Siloam? Certainly, but He tested the man's faith by the command to go wash his eyes in the pool. The man obeyed and sight came after the washing. So God today tests our faith by the command to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

5. *Water was between Saul of Tarsus and sins washed away.* Christ appeared to Saul to qualify him as an apostle, not to save him. He was told to go into Damascus and there he would be told what to do. Ananias was sent to him and told Saul to "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

6. *Water is placed between the sinner and righteousness.* Christ is our example (1 Peter 2:21). He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness

(Matthew 3:14). In order to be acceptable to God was also must work righteousness (Acts 10:34, 35). This includes all of God's commands (Psalms 119:172). Baptism is a command of God, therefore, baptism stands between the sinner and righteousness.

7. *Water stands between the sinner and forgiveness* (Acts 2:38). "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Can one be saved without repentance? No? Well, in this passage baptism is coordinate with, equal to repentance. Therefore, God put water baptism between the sinner and remission of sins.

8. *God put water between the sinner and Christ*. In order to be saved one must be in Christ. To get into Christ one must be baptized. "For as many of you as have been baptized INTO Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

9. *Water stands between the sinner and the blood of Christ*. Christ shed His blood in His death, and water came with it (John 19:34). These two elements are inseparable (1 John 5:8). None can be saved without the blood, but how to contact it? Since Christ shed His blood in His death we must be baptized into His death to contact the blood (Romans 6:3, 4). Thus we see the importance of baptism here: it is the medium by which we are brought into contact with the blood, which cleanses our sins. This being true, one does not have salvation until he is baptized to reach the blood.

10. *Water is between the sinner and new life*. Life comes after birth. The new birth includes baptism (John 3:3-5). One is a new creature when he enters Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). One has new life after baptism (Romans 6:4) and gets into Christ by baptism (Galatians 3:27).

11. **GOD PUT WATER BETWEEN THE SINNER AND SALVATION!** "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Christ here put baptism between faith and salvation. This is the Lord's doings, not mine. It is too clear for any to misunderstand. Though baptism may seem foolish to us, remember that God chose the foolish things to put to shame the worldly-wise (1 Corinthians 1:18-27). Let us follow the Lord's ways and be blessed, for, as in the examples above, we see that the blessings received depend upon our compliance with the conditions imposed by Jehovah.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical name (Romans 16:16).

3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joël 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it. (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3,4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelations 2:10).

Marriage, Divorce, And Remarriage

ROBERT R. TAYLOR, JR.

Jehovah's Book touches marriage and the family framework from the early chapters of Genesis to the latter portions of the New Testament. Marriage began nobly and beautifully in Genesis 2. Solomon, the Wisest of the Ages, affirmed that a wise woman builds her house but the foolish plucketh her's down in destruction. (Prov. 14:1) Furthermore, he affirms that the man who finds a wife finds a good thing. (Prov. 18:22). The origin of a prudent wife, according to the inspired affirmation of Proverbs 19:14, is from the Lord. God's woman of worthiness is portrayed with the inspired breath of feminine beauty in Proverbs 31:10-31. Subsequent to a question from his enemies the Lord set the marital record straight once and for all in Matthew 19:3-9. In Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-4 Paul laid well the firm foundation for a solid and secure marriage and the formation of a happy, holy and harmonious home.

All is not well with the American home. America has become a nation of marred marital vows, of broken homes, of subsequent adulterous marriages and of handicapped children. The survival of

sagging homelife in our day in one of the most crucial and critical problems currently challenging us.

Three queries will be raised and answered with brevity in this article. They will get at the heart of the matter. Success within the first sphere of our three-point study would eliminate the problems of divorce and adulterous remarriages.

What is Marriage?

Marriage is real in its nature. It is as real as the God who instituted it in the excellencies of Eden, as the Christ who once blessed a marriage feast in Cana with his divine presence, as the Holy Spirit who rules and regulates it through Biblical guidelines and as the Bible which declares marriage to be honorable in all and the marital bed to be void of any defilement. Marriage should not be entered today and treated on some troubled tomorrow as though it never existed.

Marriage is divine in its origin, Genesis 2 tells of the beautiful beginning of majestic marriage. Marriage began in the mind of our Maker before it was consummated between Adam and Eve. In Matthew 19 Jesus Christ looked back to the excellencies of Eden and stamped his approval on the majestic and marvelous origin of marriage.

Marriage is intimate in its relationship. The husband and wife who enter this sacred relationship no longer remain twain but become one flesh. This union permits a special knowing of each other. Such a depth of knowing is restricting to marriage and marriage only. Marriage is the honorable way to bring children into the world. Marriage transcends all other human relationships. Husband and wife are intimate partners for a lifetime. They can be intimate in the breathtaking beauty of this relationship and with Jehovah's full approval resting upon their oneness or union.

Marriage is mature in its responsibilities. That is why it is not a child's game. It is for those old enough to make mature and responsible decisions. Marriage is for men and women; it is not for little boys and girls. In Genesis 29:15-20 a mature Jacob made plans for the taking of a wife. Jacob was a man at the time; he was not a boy.

Marriage is monogamous in its character. This means one man for one woman and vice versa. God did not make two Eves for the first Adam. He did not make two Adams for the first Eve. He made one man and for him one woman. That says much for his future intentions in the realm of marital relationships. The Bible teaches that the man and his wife become one flesh. God joins them together. He supplies the glue; he does the cementing of the two. What he joins or yokes together is not

to be put asunder by men. The woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. So is the husband to his wife. (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Matthew 19:9 supplies the lone exception to the putting away of a fornicating mate and the entrance into another marriage for the innocent party and the innocent party only. Polygamy, when practiced in the Old Testament, always produced an ever-increasing package of persistent problems. There is no way to avoid such when God's laws are ignored and disobeyed in the multiplication of marital mates which is par for modern marriages. Polygamy today means one mate at the time but through ease of divorce means many mates over a lifetime. Such cannot be right to the sight of God and in the sight of righteous people.

Marriage is permanent in its duration. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt. 19:6) Marriage is a lifetime contract. The parties to it are three—not two. There is God; there is husband; there is wife. That makes three—not two! Men and women who enter marriage need to write permanence upon their marriage license and not seek out the exit sign at the first show of trouble. Marriages that work have to be worked at diligently by both husband and wife. There is to be a leaving of parents and a cleaving to each other.

Marriage is uplifting in its designs. It enables men and women with normal passions to fulfil them and still be free of fornication. (1 Cor. 7:1ff) It provides worthwhile purposes that bring out the best that is in human hearts and human lives.

Marriage is mutual in its responsibilities. The wife is to be submissive and is to love her husband. The husband is to be head of the wife, is to love his wife as Christ loves the church, is to love her as he loves his own body and is to dwell with her according to knowledge. (Eph. 5:22-23; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

Marriage is for a man and woman. It is not to be a lesbian or homosexual relationship involving two of the same sex. God recognizes no "brideless" or "groomless" marriages. Only depraved state or a degenerate society could condone such either yet we stand on its threshold today in our morally sagging era. Sodomy must be kept out of marriage.

The Golden Rule philosophy of Matthew 7:12, the "be ye kind" admonition of Ephesians 4:32 and the "be courteous" exhortation of 1 Peter 3:8 would work wonders for helping couples achieve marvelous and majestic matrimony.

Why Divorce?

Divorce is one of the dilemmas of our decade; it is one of the tragedies of our time. It means a breakdown of an institution that God joined. Yet one million couples obtained a divorce in America in 1975. Divorce means a violation of a lifetime vow. Yet two million mates participated in divorce actions in 1975. Remember a million divorces involve two million husbands and wives. A divorce subjects both parties to grievous temptations. Each may enter into an adulterous marriage. Divorce means handicapped children. They are the innocent bystanders, but oh how divorce touches and mars their precious hearts, their impressionable spirits. Divorce means that the standards of Eden in Genesis 2 have been exchanged for the divorce system of Malachi 2 which Jehovah said he hated. Deity smiled on marriage in Genesis 2; Deity frowned on divorce in Malachi 2. Majestic marriage in Genesis 2 becomes married matrimony in Malachi 2. Divorces lead to adulterous marriages or to lives of outright promiscuousness for millions in our day. Either course leads straight to hell for its sensual practitioners. Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:9 still only allow divorce on the grounds of fornication. The offended party who puts away the fornicating party is the only one who may remarry as long as they both live. In no sense of the term can be guilty party remarry. He cannot meet the qualification of Matthew 19:9. Only the innocent person who puts away one guilty of fornication can remarry. But the fornicator is the one who is put away. God does not allow him to remarry. God's law relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage remains the same. We cannot change it with impunity to fit a friend, a family member or even ourselves when we face such situations as these. Regardless of the multitude of man-made changes in easing the binding nature of marriage, the Bible has not changed in this matter of moving gravity. When men and women follow strictly the Bible pattern for marriage, divorce will cease to be one of our Herculean problems, one of our crying shames.

Who May Remarry?

Remarriage implies that a first one has been contracted but is no longer considered to be binding. Therefore the person is interested in the contracting of another marriage. Let us view it negatively at first. It need to be recognized that some people cannot remarry. Those may not remarry whose first marriages ended upon grounds other than fornication. These grounds would include habitual drunkenness, failure to provide, desertion, mental cruelty, incompatibility, the highly popular and

current no-fault variety, etc. This is true of both parties of divorces for these grounds. A person cannot remarry who has been the guilty party and has been put away by the offended mate. No appeal can be made to Matthew 19:9 in his case for an approved remarriage and it will take far more than the popular handcuff argument to win remarriage rights for the guilty party.

Viewed positively the person may remarry whose mate has died provided the potential partner for marriage has no entangling obstructions from past relationships. In the case of a Christian widow she must abide by the instructions of 1 Corinthians 7:39 and marry only in the Lord, i.e. a Christian. The innocent party who has put away a fornicating partner may enter into another marriage provided the partner chosen is free or eligible to marry.

Conclusion

It is the basic contention of this lesson that one may marry who has never been married before. It is the basic contention of this lesson that one whose mate has died is free to marry again. It is the basic contention of this lesson that an innocent one who has put away a fornicating partner is free to remarry. It is the basic contention of this lesson that no other person, save one in these three categories, is free to marry or remarry in case it is a second marriage.

We need to get back to what the Bible says relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage and cease tampering with the Lord's law on these vastly important subjects.

If "Christians" Were Christians

W. DOUGLASS HARRIS

Our premise is to project what some conditions would be in Christendom if all those who profess to be "Christians" were Christians in the biblical sense.

I. There would be no racial prejudice. Jesus and all His apostles were Jews. He said that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), meaning that it was through that nation of old that the divine scheme of human redemption was developed and unfolded, which included the coming of

Christ as the promised Redeemer.

Jesus understood the prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans, because the Samaritans were a mongrel race, but He ignored it and requested a drink of water from a Samaritan woman at Sychar. He converted the woman and accepted the invitation of the Samaritans to abide with them. What a bold action on the part of our Lord to destroy the wall of prejudice that existed between the ancient Jews and Samaritans!

As far as God is concerned, there has been no racial distinction since Christ died (Galatians 3:26-29).

II. There would be no war among Christians. Christians do not settle differences by fighting them out by carnal warfare. Christ, who is the commander-in-chief of Christians, never led an army or fought a battle in carnal warfare.

When all professed "Christians" crown Christ king in their lives, wars among them will cease.

III. The world would be turned upside down morally and spiritually. This is what early Christians did by their teaching and practice (Acts 17:6). We need a burning zeal for Christ and His cause like they had. Regretfully, the love and zeal of many professing Christians have grown cold.

If "Christians" were Christians in the scriptural sense, there would be a return to first-century Christianity, with the Bible as the sole guide in religious matters, and the church of the New Testament as the only religious body. There would be a return to the true spirit of Christ, with His love for mankind and His desire to save the lost. Christians would have *purpose*.

If Dirt Could Talk

OWEN COSGROVE

The Lord's "Parable of the Sower" (Matthew 13:1ff, Mark 4:1ff, Luke 8:1ff) has also been called the "Parable of the Soils." These soils represent four types of human hearts.

The Wayside Heart

In its honest moments, this heart reveals an astonishing indifference to God and His will. Satan snatches the seed of the Gospel away through pride, doubt, and indifference. The wayside heart talks about everything but God and His Word. Spiritually speaking, there is no room for God in this heart, and therefore, there will be no place in heaven for it.

The Shallow Ground Heart

In this heart the Word springs up quickly, but the least bit of persecution or difficulty wilts it. It believes for awhile, and then falls away (Luke 8:13). There is no depth of spirituality in this heart. This heart is fickle and shallow, capricious and unstable. The Word in this heart lacks substance and roots, and so it withers and fades away.

The Burdened Ground Heart

This heart will talk to you about all of its appointments, obligations responsibilities, and duties. This heart is preeminently concerned with cares and riches and the pleasures of this life. Therefore, it brings no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14). This heart says, "Please get somebody else. I am too busy. I do not have time."

The Good and Honest Ground Heart

This heart speaks the most beautiful lesson in the world: "*seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). What a message! What a declaration! May our hearts ever speak this dedicated theme and bring fruits with patience (Luke 8:15).

Our hearts do talk. Our message of life is manifest before God and man. May our hearts be the soil out of which grows great spiritual fruit to God's glory. "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*" (Psalms 19:14).

The Beauty of Baptism

MACK LYON

People who read their Bibles know that baptism is a frequent subject there. Various forms of the word are found more than a hundred times in the New Testament. All of the major "Christian" denominations perform some act which they define as "baptism." So, a person seeking the way of salvation in Christ should be neither surprised nor offended when the subject comes up.

However, some denominations administer a form of baptism, and some people submit to it, with neither an understanding nor appreciation for its true meaning and value. To them it is a formality, ritual, church ordinance, edict or tradition as trivial and irrelevant as visiting some shrine.

Some rob baptism of its meaning by disclaiming its relationship to salvation in Jesus Christ. They understand that since the sinner is saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), it is a contradiction to say that baptism is "*for (unto) the remission (forgiveness) of sin,*" as in Acts 2:38. However, when one scripture seems to us to contradict another scripture, it is obvious we are misunderstanding one, or perhaps both of them.

So, it is important to all of us to know what baptism is all about.

The Holy Spirit helps us in the writings of the apostle Peter, who said of the great flood of Noah's day, "*wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 3:20-21).

The reader cannot evade that statement: "*baptism doth also now save us.*" It will help us in understanding the verse if we read it and omit the parenthetical thought, then come back to it. "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" In being baptized a person is not just obeying some church ordinance; he is not just performing a ritual, or keeping an empty command; he is reliving the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in so doing, he is saved (Romans 6:3-4).

To strengthen that, the Holy Spirit moves Peter to insert the parenthesis: "*Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.*" It is not merely taking a bath. While he is not addressing the "mode" of baptism,

(sprinkling or immersion), he settles the question. The unbelievers seeing people baptized might think they were merely bathing, which certifies immersion as the method of baptism.

Well, if it is not a bath, what is baptism all about? It is *"the answer of a good conscience toward God."* The New American Standard Version translates it, *"an appeal to God for a good conscience,"* not on the person's merit, but by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

People who reject baptism as a "work" by which a person tries to merit his salvation, fail to see the real meaning of baptism. When properly understood, Bible baptism actually is a denial of salvation by meritorious works and an affirmation of salvation on the merits of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism marks the time a person is washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5).

Change Your Clothing!

HERBERT LEDFORD

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 Paul states through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the fundamental principles of the gospel, or good news, of Christ are that Christ died for our sins; that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead the third day, thus "bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Timothy 1:10) In stating, in 1 Corinthians 15, the death, burial, and resurrection he prefaced these things by saying. "I declare unto you the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Verse 1.)

In Romans 6:17, 18 Paul wrote, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you: being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." What form, mold, or pattern did we obey that resembles the death, burial, and resurrection? Paul already answered this accomplishment in the earlier part of this chapter. He said. "Know ye not that so many of us were baptized into Christ were baptized into 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." (Romans 6:3,4)

Growing up in the rolling hills of Middle Tennessee, I was the typical mischievous boy, surrounded by and associating with a large

group of like nature. We played sand lot football, wrestled, and one favorite "sport" was to hide in trees and jump down on one of our group passing by. This resulted in black eyes, bloody noses, and dirty clothing. My mother is ninety years old, but I can still hear her saying, "You are filthy! Go clean yourself up! Take off that mess, and change your clothing! I want my children in look civilized!" Then the strangest happened: I was the subject of scorn and ridicule by some of my buddies for trying to stay clean!

In the third chapter of Colossians, Paul, the master of the metaphor, says in essence, "Do not be disgusting by putting on again the filthy clothing you took off when you were washed in the blood of the lamb—the dirty, nasty clothing of anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying to another. Stay clean—you are members of the Lord's family! Therefore, put on the nice, clean clothing of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive as the Lord forgave. And over all this beautiful clothing, put on the coat of love, binding your new clothing in complete unity."

Think of an important item of our new clothing. What a beautiful garment it is! The word, "kindness" comes from the same cognate root word from which comes "kindred," or as we Southerners say, "kinfolks." We are kinfolks in God's great family! Someone has said, "Kindness is being always able to say the nicest things in the nicest way." However, what a paradox it is to observe that the two hardest statements for God's children to say are, "I love you" and "I am sorry." Are we afraid someone will label one of us a "sissy," just like I used to do when I was a little boy, trying to keep my changed clothing clean?

"I have wept in the night
at the shortness of sight
That to some others needs made
me blind;

But I never have yet felt a
twinge of regret
For being a little too kind!"

Prayerfully consider the following immortal words and make them
your own:

"Any good that I can do
or any kindness that I
can show

Let me do it now—

For I shall not pass this
way again."