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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"

To worship means to render or pay reverence; respect; honor or devotion. In John 4:24 Christ taught that we must worship God. He is to be worshipped, because He is our heavenly Father. He is the one who has created us and given us life and everything to sustain our life. He is and has been from the beginning, concerned about our welfare. So much so that to redeem us from sin and to snatch us from the fire of hell, He allowed His Word to become a man, Christ, and laid our sins on him and allowed him to die for our sins in our stead. He wants us to live with Him in heaven; therefore He Has paid such a great price for our sins. This shows how much God loves us; since He spared not even His own Son, but gave him for the propitiation of our sins. He is, therefore, indeed, worthy of our reverence, and respect, and honor, and devotion.

While God must be the object of our worship, we must though remember, as Christ taught, in the Bible, that God is Spirit. He is not like a man or a beast or animal. He is the Creator of man. Man cannot imagine and create or form God by his imagination. If God alone is to be worshipped, and indeed He alone must be; then man must not bow down before any images

or pictures or things of nature, the things God have created, such as, sun, moon, stars, waters and trees. The foolishness and the futility of idolatry is shown in the Bible, in Isaiah 44:9-17. Thus we read: "Those who make a graven image, all of them are useless. And their precious things shall not profit; they are their own witnesses; they neither see nor know, that they may be ashamed. Who would form a god or cast a graven image that profits him nothing? Surely all his companions would be ashamed; and the workmen, they are mere men. Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, they shall be ashamed together." And, then, he vividly describes it all, by saying: "The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals. Fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms. Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and faint." Likewise, "The craftman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane; he marks it out with the compass; and makes it like a figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He hews down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall be for a man to burn. For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread, Indeed he makes a god and worship it; he makes it a carved image, and falls down before it. He burns half of it in the fire; with his half he eats meat; he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire." And the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." Through the centuries man has created for himself several gods, in different shapes, figures and images. He worships things that he can see, both living and dead. Men have created images, pictures of Christ and Mary and of others and bow down before them; others bow before a cross or a tomb or some other object; not realising that God, who is Spirit, God alone, is worthy of man's worship. Such is to dishonor and degrade the almighty and the living God.

Not only we should worship God, but we must worship God in spirit and truth. Worship involves attitude and action. In worship of God we must have the right attitude of heart. To

worship in spirit means, the inner person, the spiritual part or the spirit of man should be involved in it. For many entertainment is the object of worship. They have their choirs and quartets, and stage performances; they organize sensational healing services, even dancing acts, if it can bring a great crowd. A crowd means more to them, no matter what the cost. Their worship becomes a show to please men. Whether it is the singing of spiritual songs or prayer or any other acts of worship, the appeal is to men and not God. If this is not true, then why do people use musical instruments of various kinds while singing spiritual songs in praise of God? Does God require them? Is he a man who like to hear "beautiful" sounds of music of an organ or guitar or drums? On the contrary, the Bible teaches: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15). God has created us, He want us to worship Him; our hearts, our lips, our minds and souls or spirits should get involve in praising Him. He does not want worship of things that we have made or invented. (Amost 6:3,5). He does not require the worship of dead things, but He want our worship; the living being whom He has created. Standing in the midst of Mars' Hill the apostle Paul thus spoke to his listeners: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24,25). God does not require our musical concerts, clapping of our hands, flowers, candles, insence, or a host of other things. He is Spirit. And, those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Christ taught: "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 seem by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."(Matthew 6:5). Their reward has been the praises of men! They have heard them; they have appreciated beautifully and impressively delivered prayer—it was for them, and not for God: And, this applies to each and every act of our worship of God. Paul said, therefore, "What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding, I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15).

So, while we should worship with spirit, we should also worship with understanding. Understanding the truth of God that He has revealed for man. Christ spoke to God: "Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth." (John 17:17). Truth is God's word, and that's what the Bible is. The Bible contains the will of God, His mind, His truth. Not only has God created man and requires man's worship; but he has also revealed to man what kind of worship does He require. To worship in truth means to worship according to the truth of God, as He has revealed for us today through Christ, His Son, and his apostles. Yet, the truth of the matter is that millions of people on earth today are worshipping God ignorantly; because they are ignorant of the true and living God and His will for man. They have a desire to worship the Divine Being, but are not willing to find out who He is and what is His will for man. So they have devised various mediums of devotions to Him. The Bible, at Romans 1:18-23, says: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four footed beasts and creeping things." Just think, how many millions of people around the world worship human beings, beasts and animals and creeping things, and images and things of nature! Yet, the truth remains, that there is a true and living God, who rightly and really deserves to be worshipped.

But, then think of the millions of people who are worshipping God in vain, because their worship of Him is according to the teaching and doctrine of men. Christ pointed out: "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And, in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8 & 9). Not only are they worshipping Him without the

involvement of their heart in worship of God, but their worship is according to the doctrines and commandments of men; and therefore it is vain. The fact of the matter is: Whatever I do in worship of God, I must consult the will of God; I should go to the word of God and see if such and such is authorized in God's word? or, what does the word of God says, I must do in His worship? Please note the followings:

After the establishment of the church, almost two thousand years ago, the New Testament of God teaches: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." (Acts 20:7). "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...." (1 Corinthians 16:2). "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:19,20).

Under the Old Testament the Jews observed the Sabbath, which was the last day of the week. Under the New Testament, however, Christians came together on the first day of the week, Sunday, for worship. The first day of the week has been called "The Lord's day." (Revelation 1:10). The first day of the week is of the great significant, because it was on the first day of the week that Jesus Christ arose from the dead (Mark 16:9). On this day Christ appeared to his disciples in his resurrected body (John 20:1,19,26). Also, according to Acts chapter two, the promise of Christ building his church, (Matthew 16:18), was fulfilled on this day, that is, the church of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18); to which he adds all the saved ones daily (Acts 2:47); for which he shed his blood on the cross (Acts 20:28); and whose Saviour he is (Ephesians 5:23), was established on the first day of the week. The gospel of Christ began to be preached on the first day of the week, as we read in Acts 2 and for the first time the believers of Christ were exhorted to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Therefore, the church assembled on every first day of the week, from its beginning, for worship. While the breaking of

bread, or observance of the Lord's Supper was vital part of their worship, and is still today, Christians sing hymns and spiritual songs to praise God (without the accompaniment of any musical instruments); pray to God, through Christ, giving Him thanks for all He has done for us; then, they read or study from the book of God, the Bible, to know God's will; and give from their income as God has prospered them, which may be used in helping people in their spiritual and physical needs.

Those who understand that God is Spirit and honor Him; they worship Him in spirit and truth.

The Promised Kingdom (Church) Would Never Be Destroyed

J.C. CHOATE

Daniel prophesied that the Lord would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed, one that it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44). Many other prophecies were made to indicate *where* it would be established and *when* it would be established (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29).

John the Baptist came preaching that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand* (Matthew 3:1,2) and Christ said that *the kingdom would come with power in the lifetime of some of those who were present at that time* (Mark 9:1). Christ also asked his disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10).

After the Apostles had confessed Christ to be the Son of God, the Lord responded by saying that he would build *his church or kingdom on that rock, that truth* (Matthew 16:18,19). Later we have the Hebrew writer saying that *we have received that kingdom* (Hebrews 12:28). Paul said to the Christians at Colosse—and he included himself—that the Father had delivered them from darkness and *had translated them into the kingdom of God's dear Son* (Colossians 1:13,14).

BUT WHEN WAS THE KINGDOM OR THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, Christ

appeared to the Apostles, "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:46-49).

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said to the Apostles just before He returned to the Father in heaven, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

When we turn to Acts 2 we have the fulfillment of those prophecies and promises concerning the establishment of that kingdom or church. The Apostles were in Jerusalem and it was the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pentecost was a Jewish feast day which would bring Jews from all over the world. The Lord chose this occasion to be the birthday of the church so that from this very first day on which the gospel was preached, it would begin to go into all the world.

Thus it was that the stage was set, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, with the multitudes gathered together. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles and, as evidence of this, they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. They preached the gospel of Christ to the masses that were gathered there and, as a result, many who heard believed and wanted to know what they should do. They were told to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord for the remission of their sins and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The record goes on to say that they that gladly received the word were baptized and that day around 3,000 were added to the church (Acts 2:41), and that the Lord continued to add to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

So we have the church or kingdom established in Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost (which was the first day of the week) after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, around A.D. 33.

That church or kingdom has been in existence since that time. Speaking of the Lord's birth, we read, "And he shall reign

over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). You may read of it through the book of Acts and in the epistles or letters that followed.

Paul wrote, however, that there would be a falling away or an apostasy on the part of many Christians and congregations. The Spirit directed him to write, "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth*" (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Paul also spoke of a falling away in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

Church history tells us that this falling away came about through *unauthorised* and *unscriptural* church organization. God's plan was that there were to be elders and deacons over each congregation which had qualified men to serve (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1), and that each congregation was to be autonomous or self governing. In this way, even though some congregations might fall away, the one or ones that remained faithful to God could continue to represent Him.

After its establishment, the church grew and spread throughout the world. In time, however, there arose elders in congregations that usurped authority and began to be recognized as the *chief* elders over those congregations. Eventually this led to *one man being recognized over all the congregations in his area*. Out of this came the Catholic church in the 600's. Later the Catholic church divided into the Roman and Greek branches that continue to this day.

In the 1500's Martin Luther led the Reformation Movement which attempted to reform the Roman Catholic church. This effort was not successful but did lead to the Protestant Movement which resulted in all of the denominational churches that we are familiar with in the present world.

In the 1700's and 1800's there arose numerous denominational people in Europe and America who advocated that we not be Protestants or Catholics but that we go back to the Bible and be Christians only, members of the church that Christ built. This was known as the Restoration Movement, an attempt to restore pure New Testament Christianity in Europe and America.

Even though it was called the *restoration movement*, that did not mean the true church had gone out of existence, that it did not exist somewhere in the world. It just meant that those individuals in America as well as in Europe (or any other place in the world where there were those who wanted to be Christians only and members of the one church of the Bible), were trying to restore the original church *for themselves*. There have been many such groups found in recent times who had done that or were trying to do that, and even in the future anytime anywhere there are those who are willing to return to the Bible and follow the New Testament pattern of Christianity, they become the Lord's people, members of His one church.

Because the majority of the church did fall away in the first centuries of its existence, they were the ones who received most of the historical attention. The same has been true with the so-called Christian world right on up to this day. But *the faithful few are always there, and always have been, will always be*. Even though the world as a whole ignored those who remained faithful, and much of their story became lost from the history records, still they were there.

Just as the prophecies and promises stated, the true church of our Lord will not be destroyed, and **it will continue as His voice in the world, even until He returns**. The Holy Spirit directed Paul to say that when Jesus comes at the sound of the last trumpet, *there will be faithful Christians alive who will be caught up in the clouds to meet Him*. (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The promise is also made that after judgment the Lord will deliver His kingdom up to God where His people will dwell with him forevermore (1 Corinthians 15:24).

So we can be sure that the Lord's kingdom, His church, once established would stand forever. **There has never been a time when the Lord did not have someone on earth to represent Him**. We know this, because it was the balance of good and evil being overset that brought about the destruction of the world in the time of Noah. **If God's people — the church — had ceased to exist and to permeate the world to some degree with righteousness, the world would of necessity have been destroyed**. But the prophecy that there will be Christians living when Jesus returns is God's own word, again, that the church will never die. It has not only existed *in promise*,

through the written word, but *in reality*. Neither was it established, eventually to go out of literal existence and to exist only in word, which is called the *seed* of the kingdom; this evasive explanation won't work because the "seed" is *words in a Book* but the "kingdom" is *people*.

No, if God is to be believed at all, He must be believed fully. We must accept Jesus' word that, though individual Christians and congregations here and there in the world might prove faithful or unfaithful, the church itself would continue as His representation on earth until it is finally delivered up to the Father where it will exist eternally. Neither will the Lord come back one day to establish it as a literal kingdom, over which He will reign victoriously for 1,000 years. The promised church, the spiritual kingdom which Christ came to establish, already exists, and will exist forever.

Are you a member of the church of Christ? If not, our prayer is that you will want to become a member of it. Only in the Lord's church, and as a faithful Christian until you die, can you expect to be eternally saved as a part of that kingdom.

Especially for Women

Search For Truth

What about Baptism and the New Birth?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Andrew's face showed his inner happiness as he sat down at the table, ready for another study session. He reached for Rachel's notebook and looked closely at the chart that was developing. "By the time we finish the book of Acts, we should have a good understanding of just what was taught during that time about how a person is saved from his sins."

"A pattern is definitely developing." Rachel agreed. "The main subject taught each time was *Jesus*, that He is the Son of God; and in Acts 8 Philip taught the Samaritans about *the kingdom*. Then in every case except the Ethiopian, it specifically points out that the people believed or were cut to the heart or

were told that they must believe.”

“Repentance is not mentioned in most of the conversions,” Andrew noted. “but since the word means ‘to turn from sin and to dedicate one’s life to righteousness’, according to the dictionary, then it’s obvious that they couldn’t have obeyed God without going through that change of heart.”

“The confession of faith in Christ is mentioned only once, up to now,” Rachel said. “See — there in Acts 8 where the eunuch wanted to be baptized.”

“There’s no doubt about the importance of baptism!” Andrew said, pointing to the chart. “It’s mentioned every time! But I wonder why baptism is given such importance? It seems to be only a symbol or a figure —but, of what, exactly?”

Rachel picked up the concordance and turned to ‘baptize’: “Skipping the references we’ll be reading in Acts, look in Romans 6:3, Andrew.”

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

“That explains so much!” exclaimed Andrew. “It was in Jesus’ death that He made the way for us to be saved — and so *in baptism we die too* and by dying, as he said, to sin, we *become saved!* And that’s why baptism is a burial, not sprinkling or pouring water on one’s head! So, just as Philip and the man from Ethiopia *both went down into the water*, we go down into the water to be baptized — and buried with Christ — and then we come up out of the water, as He came out of the grave. It’s like the old sinner has died with Jesus, and a new saved person has been born!” Andrew exclaimed excitedly.

“That really does make sense,” agreed Rachel. “So, is that what the ‘new birth’ means? I remember hearing people talk about ‘being born again’, and I always wondered what that was. I’ll see if there is anything in the concordance about a spiritual birth.” After a long silence she said, “Of course, there are lots of

places that talk about 'birth' or 'born' because that's a physical happening. But I think this verse in John 3:3 is the one I remember hearing."

Andrew read, "*Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'*"

"These words add a lot to our knowledge," Andrew said, as he continued to study the verses open before him. "The new birth is *of water and of Spirit*. Do you remember that we were puzzled when we read in Acts 2 about the 'gift of the Holy Spirit'? — Here it is: '*...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*' — We said we'd have to continue to study about 'the gift', and who or what the 'Holy Spirit' is, and what happens at the time of baptism. These verses add to that, but leave some questions yet. He *does* say, though, that just as *water* is involved in the new birth — that must be the water of baptism —, *the Spirit* is also involved."

"And there's 'the kingdom' again!" Rachel remarked. "Jesus said that without the new birth, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. So the birth, baptism, is like being born into a spiritual family — God's family —, which is also called His kingdom."

"And the kingdom, according to Jesus, is the church! So by believing in Jesus and then being born again, we become a part of His family, or His kingdom, or His church — and in that process our sins are forgiven."

"Here's another reference in the concordance to the Spirit and to baptism," Rachel said. "*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*' That's 1 Corinthians 12:13."

"Well, isn't that clear!" remarked Andrew. "Simply, by the Spirit, all are baptized into that family!"

"Check Galatians 3:26,27, too," Rachel suggested.

"*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*" There it is again: the necessity to believe that Jesus is God's

Son, and the fact we become the family of God! *'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'*"

"These verses are a lot like the place in 1 Corinthians," Andrew said. "Both talk about Jews and Greeks — all people, really — being united in Jesus. That would be the same as being brought together in 'one body'. And in both verses, he says that baptism is the way into the family. That fits perfectly with the picture of the new birth!"

"We got off on this tangent about faith and baptism tonight, and didn't make any progress on our chart!" laughed Rachel.

"But this was good," Andrew said. "When we study the other conversions in Acts, we'll understand more about what was actually happening."

To be Continued . . .

Church Of Christ's Doctrine

FRANCIS DAVID

We the churches of Christ are being accused from time to time that we have made our own doctrine, which is called the church of Christ's doctrine. We want to tell our friends that we have not prepared our own doctrine but instead we are trying to teach and preach the doctrine of Christ. Jesus our Lord has given the things to us by his own authority and whatever we teach, we teach it by His authority. The doctrine of Christ is contained in the Bible. If you try and search it sincerely without any prejudice you will find the things that we teach exactly based on the Bible.

All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, in righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16). We believe that all Scriptures is given to us by the almighty through his inspiration and it is profitable for doctrine. We try to speak where the Scriptures speak and we are silent where the Scriptures is silent. We do not want to teach or preach which is contrary to the scriptures. Actually we all are warned that we are not suppose to add and take away the things which are written in this book. (Rev.

22:18,19). We can see that religious world is adding a lot of things in Christianity and also they have taken away the things which are taught in the Bible. Man made doctrines are prevailing and people are blindly following the things which are not taught in the Bible. People are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. We see even in John's day people were of same mentality and he had to warn them by saying these words: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (I John 9).

The other day my wife was traveling in the train, she had a Bible discussion with a religious leader. As my wife was talking to him, in between their talk he said: "I know what you are teaching you are teaching the doctrine of J.C. Chaote." Now, how can this man say like this. She was trying to show him everything from the scriptures. She told him, this the doctrine of Christ. Why this man said the doctrine of Chaote, may be because this man must be receiving our literature and Brother Chaote is an excellent dedicated Christian and a good writer. He always writes the things which are based on the Bible. Whatever he writes, he supports the same through the Scriptures. We the members of the Lord's church will always support the teaching by giving the verses from the Bible. When we say about the Church, we will support it by saying that Christ promised to build the church in Matt. 16:18. There is only one church (one body). (Eph. 4:4; Eph. 1, Col. 1:18). This is not our doctrine but the doctrine of the Bible. The Bible says "Prove all things." (I Thess. 5:21). Please do not swallow each and every doctrine which is being taught by different people but try to prove whether these things are so or not. The people of Berea in the Bible were noble because they daily search the scriptures. (Acts 17:11).

There are so many things that we had been teaching and preaching for so many years, and our aim is to preach the truth in season and out of season. (II Tim. 4:2). We have the gospel of Jesus, the good news and he has commanded us that we need to take this good news to all the people of the world. (Matt. 28:18-19). Therefore, realizing our responsibility we are taking the gospel to the people. The good news is that Jesus our Lord died for our sins, he was buried and then he rose again from the grave, on the third day. (I Cor. 15:1-4). The doctrine of Christ is

that one must believe in Jesus, confess him as the Son of God, then repent of his sins (old way of life), and be buried in the watery grave, in order to be baptised and Christ's doctrine says: that when a person does this he will be saved and therefore will be added to the church which Jesus himself established. (Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Acts. 2:38; Acts. 22:16; Acts. 2:47). Some people say why the churches of Christ put much stress on baptism. We do so because this is a command of God and not an ordinance of the church. We do not practice infant baptism because it does not come under doctrine of Christ. Please note that church of Christ is not used as a denominational designation. We say Church of Christ, because the church belongs to Christ, and he is the master and owner of the church. All honour must go to him. The new Testament is the only rule of faith that we have. We do not follow the books such as catechism, confession of faith etc. These are man made doctrines.

Is the church that you are member of is abiding in the doctrine of Christ? Are you practising the things which are taught by Jesus and his apostles? Just compare and see whether you are the New Testament church or not.

"The Measure of My Days"

CLEM THURMAN

Someone has said, "Be careful of your time, for it is the stuff eternity is made of." We may argue with the theology of that statement, but there is validity in its implications. Our most priceless commodity is *Time*, for it cannot be bought back again. Nor has there ever been found a substitute for time! It is one of the factors of life over which we have absolutely no control. We can use it only as the Lord gives it to us. But we are unable to turn back the calendar to re-live a single day or hour that has slipped into the past.

The psalmist wrote, "*Jehovah, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; let me know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as handbreadths; and my life-time is as nothing before thee: surely every man at his best*

estate is altogether vanity" (Psa.39:4-5). David, in this text, is not seeking to probe into the manner of his death. Rather, he was pondering the uncertainty and brevity of life, that all of the joys of life could be quickly and finally snatched away. This is the sober reflection that entertains the thought of all sane men. They seek to know "*the measure of my days*" in order to evaluate their time and how best to use it.

"ALL IS VANITY UNDER THE SUN"

Time flies, and as it accelerates, the fleeting speed of the passing of day, weeks, months and years is frightening — if we view it only from the perspective of this life. We look into the tender face of a baby, then return a little later to see a rugged youth pushing aggressively into the world, confident and unafraid. We look upon a young man in prime physical condition on the athletic field, and turn again to see an old man stooped beneath the burden of years with a face etched by the pen of time. Change and deterioration mar the memory of all we have cherished of this world. Those who look to the world for value and reward must inevitably be disappointed.

Solomon records his search for the meaning of life in the book of Ecclesiastes. He wrote, "*I applied my heart to seek out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven . . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind*" (Eccle. 1:13-14). He looked to "*mirth . . . pleasure . . . laughter . . . wine*" (Eccle. 2:1-3). He checked on his great works of achievement, his many servants, gold and silver, but concluded: "*all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun*" (Eccle. 2:4-11). As he continued through the book, this richest man on earth used "*under the sun*" to mean of this world, and he repeated over and over that "*all is vanity under the sun.*" But when he came to the end of the book, he said, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*" (Eccle. 12:13).

Jesus pointed out the folly of trusting in this world, and its promises: "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God; and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:19-20,33). Don't ever

make the mistake of measuring your life, or its success, by what you have. Our Lord warned, "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15). We need to learn that! The apostle Paul wrote, "*Godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out . . . They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts*" (1 Tim. 6:6-9). We need to realize: "*All is vanity under the sun.*"

"WHAT HE SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE REAP"

Spring is replaced by Summer, then comes Fall with Winter on the way! After the sowing season comes the time for reaping. Having been raised on a farm, I learned early in life that you reap what you sow. But this is also true in life. Lustful pleasures obtained in sowing wild oats will only bring remorse and regret in later life. "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. for he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life*" (Gal. 6:7-8). The prophet of old graphically describes the inexorable result of wrong choices: "*They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*" (Hos. 8:7). It will do little good to sow wild oats and then pray for crop failure! The choices we make today put into motion the process that determines the results for us tomorrow.

When we give ourselves to the things of this world, we can look only to this world for results. "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*" (1 John 2:15-17). When we make our goal the things of this life, we can only look to this life for the result. Only by looking beyond this life can we expect a reward that will endure. Paul wrote, "*The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:9). He then listed various kinds of sinners, and said: "*Such were some of you, but you were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God*" (v.11). You see, the "Good news" (gospel) is that you

don't have to reap what you sow — IF you will come to the Lord Jesus and let Him save you.

"TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS"

Because we cannot know *"the measure of our days,"* we need to be careful how we use what we have. David wrote in another psalm, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom"* (Psa. 90:12). As I have talked with people about becoming Christians, quite often their reply is: "Not yet. May be later." How foolish! I often ask, "Please write down on this sheet of paper two dates. First, put the date you will be baptized into Christ. Second, put the date of your death." If you can't put the second date, you don't dare delay the first! The apostle Paul wrote, *"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:15-16). Or again, *"And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed"* (Rom. 13:11). In other words, don't waste time. Do what you should, now.

Israel disobeyed God in the wilderness, and they neglected to heed His warnings. *"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God . . . lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin . . . To whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief"* (Heb. 3:12-19). The inspired writer then adds, *"Let us fear, therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to come short of it"* (Heb. 4:1). God made a promise to Israel that they would possess the land of Canaan, but that was a conditional promise. When they failed to keep the conditions, they forfeited the promise. The same principle is true with us. God has promised us an eternal home, but the promise is conditional. Heb. 4:1 shows clearly that if we fail to do as God says, we forfeit that promise. We need to *"redeem the time,"* using every moment to seek after the things of God.

"THE THINGS NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL"

The apostle Paul wrote of the hope of the Christian: *"We faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward*

man is renewed day by day . . . We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). What is your goal? Where do you look for fulfillment in life? Abraham should be a good example for us: "*He looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). He instilled that goal in Isaac and Jacob, as *they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly"* (Heb. 11:16). That ought to be the goal of everyone who has the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:16). The inspired apostle Paul wrote that we are "*buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God,*" then adds: "*If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God"* (Col. 2:12; 3:1).

Because Jesus "*tasted death for every man"* (Heb. 2:9), We have salvation through His blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Col. 1:18-21). But He was also raised from the dead, and thus God: "*Begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Pet. 1:3-4). We should live with the realization that we shall soon leave this world and go to meet God, as Solomon wrote: "*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man . . . For God will bring every work into judgment"* (Eccle. 12:13-14). We need to set our goals, and live our lives, so that we can say with Paul, "*We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"* (2 Cor. 5:1).

This is the time God give us, and we need to learn to "*measure our days.*" When the house catches on fire, it is too late to get insurance. When the operation begins, it is too late to go on that diet. When the heart attack comes, it is too late to prevent it by proper diet and exercise. And when our life is ended, it is too late to study the Bible, find what the Lord wants us to do, and then do it. This is the only time we have. We must learn the Scriptures now that we will need later: "*Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee"*(Psa. 119:11). Don't wait until the temptation comes, prepare now. Don't wait until death comes, prepare now.

The Perfect Prophet

J.L. LEIFESTE

A prophet has been defined as an inspired speaker of God, or for God. In other words, the Holy Spirit supernaturally affected a prophet, through a certain amount of knowledge and motivation, to declare a message from God. Man has the choice to believe or disbelieve the message. Sometimes, these messages concerned the future (as in predictions). Sometimes, they interpreted or analyzed events. Yet, the most important part of the inspired words lay in their revelation of God's nature, attitude, and instruction.

For thousands of years, there have been many who were called "prophet" — some real and some false. But there is one genuine prophet who is greater than all others. This prophet is so great that prophecies foretold of His coming (see Deuteronomy 18:15-22; Acts 3:20-23). He is Jesus Christ, the perfect prophet. And His perfection as prophet is obvious when we consider Him in the light of the past, the present, and the future.

THE PAST

Even at the beginning of time, Jesus Christ was the conveyer of God's intentions. He was the Word, and all things were created through Him (Jn. 1:1-10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:10). No one could be better suited to be the supreme prophet of God than He who was part of God (Jn. 8:58, 10:30, 17:24). And no one could deliver God's message better than the Word. He was the divine expression, the specific channel of God's creative purpose.

Christ, the perfect messenger, was also God's message before the earth's creation (I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4, 3:9; Col. 1:25-27; II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2). When we speak of the gospel plan of salvation, we speak of Christ, for He is its central point (Eph. 1:9,10). God referred to Christ after mankind first sinned (Gen. 3:15). And from that moment, throughout the Old Testament record of man's history, we find God's promises and predictions by His prophets pointing to Jesus and that perfect plan (Gen. 12:3; 49:10; Ps. 110; Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5,6; Dan. 2:44; Mi. 5:2; Zech. 9:9; 12:10; and others).

Jesus Christ was referred to as God's "*Messenger of the*

covenant'—Malachi 3:1 (Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14; Heb. 1:1-2). The word became human to fulfill God's promises through the new covenant, the New Testament of Christ (Mt. 1:21-23; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 8:1-4; II Cor. 5:19; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:9-10, 12:24). And it was necessary that He fulfill the old covenant (Gal. 3:7-29). In order to be the unblemished (perfect) sacrifice for us, Christ had to be obedient to God in all things (Lk. 22:42; Jn. 15:10; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8-9). He obeyed the old law which had been given to the nation of Israel, He was without sin (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 9:14; I Pet. 2:22-24, I Jn. 3:5). He is the only prophet and teacher of godliness who has perfectly lived an example of His own comprehensive, perceptive, sensitive, and authoritative teaching. Because He was the Word, Jesus Christ had exclusive knowledge of God and declared (revealed) God, through voice and action, as no other human could (Jn. 1:18; 14:9; Col. 1:15). He was full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14, 17; 18:37). He was Himself the absolute truth (Jn. 14:6).

Christ was the Word through which all was created. He was, and still is, the central element of God's formula for our salvation (Jn. 11:25; I Jn. 5:11-12). He was also the one who delivered God's message of that salvation with accuracy and purity (Jn. 6:63-68; 14:24; I Jn. 1). He exemplified dedication and obedience to His heavenly Father. And as we view His time spent as a human upon the earth, He emerges as the vessel of truth, a flawless model of His own instruction. He was the perfect prophet. We can be assured that the message which Christ delivered (the New Testament plan of salvation) is the supreme message from God, and there is no error in it.

THE PRESENT

That which Christ was in the past is significant enough to command our attention and belief. But there is more in the prophet Jesus that should draw our ears to His words. He concerns us in the present time by what He is and by the message that He brought to us.

Jesus Christ is divine, the only begotten Son of God (Mt. 3:17; Lk. 4:41; Jn. 3:16; 10:30; Rom. 1:4; Col. 2:9). He is alive at God's right hand (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 22:69; Eph. 1:20). And Christ holds supreme authority which affirms and establishes His teaching (Mt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:18; I Pet. 3:22). His

divinity, authority, and eternal life insure His godly knowledge and His victory over evil. No other prophet has these characteristics. This fact calls us to an active acceptance of His message.

Today, the teaching of Christ is just as necessary and effective as it was centuries ago. It spans all time and is more essential than the message of any other man. It is the story of spiritual salvation, the proclamation of eternal life. Christ not only supplied the sacrifice which makes salvation available to us (I Pet. 1:18-19), but His words also give us an understanding of God's plan and our role in it.

The perfect prophet used more than one method to deliver that plan:

We can read His words in a **direct** style (as in Mt. 5:2-7:20; 23:1-39; Mk. 9:38-50; Lk. 17:1-10; Jn. 3:3-21; 4:7-38; 12:44-50).

We can find his teaching clothed in **parables** (as in Mt. 21:27 through 22:14; Lk. 10:29-37; 12:13-21; 14:7 through 16:31).

And we can learn from His **actions**, which showed His divinity and gave emphasis to His words (as in Mt. 4:23-24; 14:24-33; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 13:10-17; Jn. 6:1-59; chapters 9 and 21).

The lessons revealed through each of these methods are paramount. They are part of the gospel message. Yet, we must recognize that **the Scriptures written by Christ's inspired apostles and prophets are also part of the gospel message** (Jn. 20:31; Acts 17:11; Rom. 10:8; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 3:2; I Jn. 5:13). Because they were written under Christ's God-given authority, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, all the writings of the New Testament must be recognized as the words of the prophet Jesus Christ (Mk. 16:19-20; Lk. 12:12; Jn. 14:26; I Cor. 2:12-13). Thus, they are God's words.

The message delivered by Christ tells us that the soul of every man and woman is in peril (Jn. 8:24; Rom. 3:23; 6:23). It also tells us that there is a way out of that peril (Lk. 19:10; Tit. 2:14; I Pet. 2:24; 3:18). To escape condemnation, we must believe and obey the gospel of Christ (I Cor. 15: 1-4; II Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:9; I Pet. 4:17). Obedience involves becoming a Christian by following the commands and examples of the New Testament (such as Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-38). It also includes living in a godly manner. Such living is part of the new covenant

between God and mankind. The Christian life must include correct worship (see Mk. 7:7; Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29; II Cor. 9:7; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17; Heb. 10:25; II Jn. 9) and the determination to live godly (see II Cor. 5:15-17; Gal. 5:16 through 6:10; Eph. 5:8-9; Tit. 2:12; I Pet. 2:11).

Another feature of this prophet's message strongly affects the present time. Christ left a special commission to all of His disciples (Mt. 28: 18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). It is a duty, set by God, to carry His message to all people. Through it, Christ continues to reach and renew others. This duty applies to us today, and it must not be ignored.

Jesus Christ is alive, divine, and the only begotten Son of God. He possesses all authority from God. He is the true prophet for today because His message is the true, perfect, and timeless communication from God. It is meant for us. And we, to be assured that we correctly understand the message, must study all of the New Testament. We must apply His teaching to our lives and relay the gospel message to others. By realizing what Jesus Christ is, and what His words mean, we should acknowledge Him as the necessary and effective prophet — the perfect prophet — for our present time.

THE FUTURE

Regarding Christ in the light of the past and the present **positively confirms Him** as the greatest prophet of God. But Jesus also deals with the future.

Between His birth on earth and His ascension into heaven, Christ foretold many events. He foretold the destruction of both Herod's temple and the physical city of Jerusalem (Mt. 24: 1-2, 15-22; Lk. 19:42-44 and 21:5-6, 20-24). He spoke of betrayal (Mt. 26:20-25; Jn. 13:11) and His own suffering, death, and resurrection (Mk. 8:31; Lk. 9:22). He foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual kingdom, persecutions, and the preaching of the gospel (Mt. 24:4-14; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 13:23-30; 24:49; Jn. 7:39; 14:26; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8). And He foretold His own future return and the final judgment of all people who have ever lived (Mt. 11:20-24; 16:27; 24:23-31; 25:31-46; Jn 5:22-30).

Christ also used parables to inform mankind of future spiritual events. By that method, He again refers to His kingdom (the church) and the responsibilities of Christians (Mt. 13:1-52; 24:45 through 25:30; Mk. 4:30-32). Actually, the entire New

Testament text deals in some way with matters concerning the future. For the entire text concerns the new covenant and the spiritual salvation available to mankind. The New Testament Scriptures, as God's instructions delivered under authority of Christ, give us knowledge, guidance, and encouragement. They give us the hope of a wonderful future of eternal joy promised to the faithful (Col. 1:5; Heb. 10:34; I Pet. 1:3-21). Believing them, we anticipate eternal life beyond this life on earth.

So Christ used prediction and general instruction to reveal the future. Some of the events He foretold have already occurred: the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D.; Jesus' death and resurrection; the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of Christ's kingdom, the church, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Other events will yet occur. The gospel, relevant for today and for all tomorrows, is still being preached. And the day of judgment is yet to come. That day will bring to every person either eternal torment or eternal joy. By knowing that some of the things He foretold are already fulfilled—and not one event foretold by Him has failed — we become even more assured that all of His message is true. We should recognize Jesus Christ as the perfect prophet because of His delivery of God's message concerning the future.

In light of the past, the present, and the future, Jesus Christ surpasses any other prophet. He spoke of God and for God. He still speaks by way of the New Testament. His existence, nature (divine and human), works, teaching, predictions, sacrifice, and authority prove His excellence. Furthermore, this prophet is timeless. Both He and His kingdom are eternal (Isa. 9:6-7). He is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12). Salvation and righteousness in Him are everlasting (Isa. 51:6-8). His message, the gospel (the faith) of the New Testament, is the only faith which is true and acceptable to God (Eph. 4:4-6; Jude 3). No other belief reveals spiritual truth. As both message and messenger, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). Jesus Christ is the perfect prophet.

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