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The Two Adams

If we are familiar with the Bible, we know about the first Adam whose story is told in the book of Genesis of the Old Testament portion of the Bible. Many have heard of him even though they might never had read about him in the scriptures, and even though they may not believe the Bible to be God's word. We know that he was miraculously created by God, out of the dust of the earth, and that he was the first man, that the Lord created a helpmeet for him, Eve, and placed them in the garden of Eden. We know also that they were tempted of the serpent, or Satan, that they partook of the forbidden fruit, and sinned, and therefore they died spiritually, and eventually they died physically.

Yes, we know of that Adam. but did you know that the Bible tells us about a second Adam? Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, and let us read what Paul had to say: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But every man in his own order : Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Going on, he says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly : the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

As we read about Christ in the scriptures, we observe that he was compared to other Biblical characters. One was Melchisedec. In Hebrews 5-7 we read that a great man of God, Abraham offered tithes to this priest-king, Melchisedec, who was said to be a high priest of God. Not much more is known of him, such as where he came from, when he was born, who his parents were, and what happened to him. It was not that Melchisedec did not have earthly parents, etc., but there is just no record of them. But he and Christ had various things in common, since both were high priests, both were said to be without beginning and ending, and so on. Again, Christ was compared to Moses since Moses was a great leader and a great lawgiver and Christ was the same. (John 1:17).

Now we come to the two Adams, the first and the second Adam. There were many similarities between them, but also in comparing them we are able to see a number of definite contrasts between them. We will now notice some of these.

Adam was in the beginning, but the second Adam, Christ, brought about a new beginning—a new law (Hebrews 10:8-10), a new birth (John 3:3-5), a new kingdom (Hebrews 12:28), a new name (Isaiah 62:2), and a new life. (2 Corinthians 5:17). Adam was created miraculously (Genesis 1:26, 27), and Christ was born miraculously of the virgin Mary. (Matthew 1:18-25). Adam was created from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7), but Christ was from heaven. (John 3:13). Paul tells us that we bear the image of the first Adam, that is, we all have physical bodies, but

spiritually, if we are followers of Christ, we bear his image, that is, we are striving to be like him. (1 Corinthians 15:49). As a result of Adam's disobedience to God, he became a sinner. (Genesis 5). On the other hand, Christ lived without sin, a perfect life. (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Because of Adam's sin man became knowledgeable, understanding right from wrong, and therefore he became accountable for his action. In disobeying God, he became a sinner and in need of a saviour. (Romans 3:23). Christ, being the Son of God and living a perfect life, became man's saviour. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:14). We are told that in Adam all die, but in Christ we are made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22). And finally, with Adam being physical, and with death being passed upon man, then there is no hope in the flesh, but in Christ, and through the salvation that he gives to all who obey him, and the promise of a resurrection, there is eternal hope. (Romans 6:23; John 14:1-3).

So in Adam man is weak, but in Christ we are made strong. (Matthew 26:41; Ephesians 6:10). Whatever we lost in Adam, we have gained in Christ. Paul said, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And being found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:7-14).

Now, are you putting your trust in the first Adam or the Second Adam? Sad to say, most people of the world are living

for today, following man, and are thinking in terms only of what this world has to offer. This is a mistake. Look at man and his problems, his failures, and his needs. Even in his greatest accomplishments, there is no lasting satisfaction, no consolation, no assurance of another life. The wise man, then, will not look backward but forward, will not look down but up, will not put his trust in man and this world but in Christ and the world to come. Christ is the answer for man, today, tomorrow, and forever. In Adam we lose, but in Christ we win. This is what the Bible teaches and this is what we believe, and we hope you will also accept it.



**associate
editorial**

The Distinctiveness Of The Church Of Christ

No. 4

Another distinctive quality of the church of Christ is found in the worship of the church. Unlike most denominational churches who worship through human creeds and traditions, the worship of the church of Christ is simple and plain as it was in the beginning of the church, during the time of the apostles.

First of all, for worship the church comes together at an appointed place and time. Members of the church do not go to "the church", but they assemble together as church for worship on every first day of the week. "Going to the church" is a denominational concept, as they think the church is a material building. Coming together of the church for worship is also called in the Bible "the assembling of ourselves together." (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 14:27). Acts 20:7 says, "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together . . ." Since

every week starts with the first day, Sunday (Mark 16:1, 2), therefore Christians meet for worship on every first day of the week as the disciples of the Lord did in the beginning of the church.

In the worship services of the church of Christ, on every first day of the week, five acts of worship are observed with all simplicity. These are : Singing, prayer, the Lord's Supper, giving, and studying from God's word. In every dispensation God has specified how he want for his people to worship him. Hebrews 1:1, 2 states that God has revealed his will in every age. When God spoke through the fathers in the beginning of the human race, for instance, he wanted them then to offer animal sacrifices in his worship. This is what Abel did at that time, as we read, and God was pleased with his offering. But then we are told that Cain, Abel's brother, instead brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to God, but God rejected his offering. (Genesis 4:3-5). Later, in Hebrews 11:4, in the New Testament age, the inspired writer wrote : "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Notice, Abel's worship, it is said, was by faith because he did only what God had commanded. Faith, the Bible says, comes by hearing of the word of God. (Romans 10:17). Now, since Abel's worship was by faith therefore we conclude that it was according to God's will, as he had revealed then. On the other hand God rejected Cain's worship because it was not according to his commandments.

The same was true under the second dispensation or the Mosiac age. Those who lived in that age were given a law through Moses which they had to follow. They were then told specifically how they should worship. However, in the book of Leviticus we read, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord. which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." (Leviticus 10:1, 2). Now, why did God punish Nadab and Abihu ? Simply because they had offered a strange fire unto the Lord WHICH HE COMMANDED THEM NOT. What a lesson for us today !

Romans 15:4 declares : "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Today also, in this third and last dispensation, the Christian age, God has again revealed his will concerning worship. According to Hebrews 1:1, 2, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." So, today if we want to know what God requires from us in his worship then we must come to his Son Christ who speaks to us through his New Testament.

Concerning singing the New Testament says, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." To sing is the command of God. Notice, he did not authorise the use of mechanical instruments of music alongwith singing in worship today, there are those who mention the case of David who played instrument in praising God and encouraged others to do so. But remember that we are living in a different dispensation, in a different age. David offered animal sacrifices, none of us do that today. On the other hand, we partake of the Lord's supper in our worship to God, but David never did this. Simply because we live under a different age. God, in fact, never commanded the use of instruments of music in his worship. David invented those instruments for praising God, but without God's authority. And notice what God said through prophet Amos, "Woe to them . . . That chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instrument of music, like David." (Amos 6:1, 5). If we want to worship God as he wants us to worship him today then we should sing and make melody (music) in our heart. Cain, might have reasoned and said that there was no difference in offering an animal or the fruit of the ground, and likewise those who watched Nadab and Abihu being burnt to death, might have reasoned in their heart that a fire is a fire and why should it matter from where it was taken. But, the fact is, since God had not commanded or authorized their use in worship therefore they were wrong. The prophet Samuel told king Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight

in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22). As God commanded, his church today sings praises unto him without the help of any musical instrument. Also, since the command to sing and make melody is for every Christian therefore the whole church sings together, and there are no special choirs to sing for the church.

Then, there are no special prayer books used in the worship services of the church of Christ. A prayer is a petition, a request to the Father. God's children communicate through their prayers to the Father. The prayer therefore must come out from within the heart of a Christian. It should not be mechanical, with set words or phrases. Jesus warned against using vain repetitions, saying things again and again, which makes prayer a vain talk. (Matthew 6:7). He also taught how we must pray. (Luke 18:1-14; Matthew 6:5-15). Since all Christians are priests, according to 1 Peter 2:5, 9, therefore all are encouraged to pray through Christ who is our high priest. (Hebrews 7). When the church comes together for worship, a Christian man leads all the saints in prayer. There is no special priesthood or clergy to lead the assembly of God's children in prayer.

Another act of Christian worship is the Lord's supper. Concerning this act of worship we read in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." Here the first day of the week is specifically mentioned to show that to break bread or to partake of the Lord's supper Christians came together on this day. Which first day of the week was this? We are not told. Therefore if we want to follow the New Testament example then we must assemble on every first day of the week to take part in the Lord's Supper. Before his death Jesus himself instituted this supper. (Matthew 26:26-28). It is not a sacrament, but the Bible calls it "The Lord's Supper," (1 Corinthians 11:20), and "communion". (1 Corinthians 10:16). In first Corinthians chapter 11 we are also told why we are to eat of the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord's supper, and how we should do this. So in every assembly, on each first day of the week, Christians

meet to observe the Lord's supper. This is the part of the worship of the church of Christ.

Likewise, in their assembly on every first day of the week members of the church lay by in store or give their offerings. The scripture says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of the Galatian even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). All Christians who have a source of income are expected to give of their means as God has prospered them. Under the law of Moses, the Old Testament, they were expected to give a tenth of their income. But we are today commanded to give according to our income. There is no force, no set amount, and no limit. Listen to the scripture, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7). The church need money to preach the gospel, to help the needy. But to raise funds for her work the church of Christ does not organize sales or fetes, etc. The only way funds are accumulated is through giving on every first day of the week by every child of God as God has prospered him, or her.

Then, in every assembly of the church of Christ, on the first day of the week, God's word is read and studied. Just as we have already noticed from Acts 20:7, that when Christians came together upon the first day of the week at Troas to observe the Lord's supper then the apostle Paul preached unto them. Today when congregations of the church of Christ worship God on every first day of the week, creed books of uninspired men are not opened but lessons are taught from the inspired word of God. The preacher does not give his own testimony or relate some experience he might have had, but God's word is simply preached.

If you have never attended a worship service of the church of Christ, then I urge you to attend one, if there is a congregation in your area or city. By doing so you will find that it is true that the church of Christ still worship today as Christians did in the first century, in the beginning of the church.

She Shall Be Called Woman

Betty Burton Choate

Especially Made

In today's world, there is a wide range of feelings about women. Sadly, some feel that a woman is little more than an unpaid servant, bound to obey her husband's wishes and to work endless hours every day taking care of his needs.

On the other extreme are the "modern" women who would prefer to enter the man's world, declaring themselves to be "equal" to men. Some even go so far as to demand all of the "advantages" they believe men to have, yet at the same time they would expect consideration and concessions because they are women. What those women really want are the privileges of both groups and the responsibilities of neither.

Between these two extremes (neither of which is right) is woman as she was created to be. This section of "The Bible Teacher" will deal each month with some Biblical teaching especially concerning women.

Can you imagine the scene "in the beginning"? God had prepared a perfect home—a literal paradise—for the crowning act of His creation: He formed man lovingly, perfectly, from the earth, in His own image. Then he breathed into him the breath of life and that first man—Adam—became a living, moving, thinking being.

Only one thing was wrong with this perfect scene. Every living thing was paired with another of its own kind, and all were empowered by God to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth...Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind..." Only Adam was alone. When he had seen all of the creatures, "...there was not found a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 1:22,24; Genesis 2:20).

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh

in its place. Then the rib which the Lord had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:21-24).

What do we learn from these verses ?

- (1) That man, alone, was not and is not complete.
- (2) That God's intention in making woman was to design a helper who would be comparable to man; one who would soften his harshnesses and strengthen his weaknesses so that together they would be lacking in nothing.
- (3) That woman was not made from another lump of clay but she was made from man, so that both she and the man would realise the special oneness God wanted them to share.
- (4) That when a man and a woman marry, they are to devote themselves to each other.

So Eve, the mother of all living, was especially made for Adam. And throughout history, a good wife has continued to be God's greatest gift to a husband and a home.

They Who Are Not Ready . . .

Shannon Choate

"...thou shalt not know what hour I come upon thee." (Revelation 3:3). Have you wondered what this verse is saying ? It talks of the second coming of Christ. Many times the Bible speaks of this.

I have two examples of this that I am going to mention, but there are many other places in Bible that tell of Christ's second coming.

The Ten Virgins. Matthew 25:1-13.

This parable that Christ told is about ten virgins. Five of these virgins were very wise, but five were very foolish. These virgins took their oil lamps and went to meet the bridegroom at a wedding. The foolish took their lamps, but did not take oil with them. However, the wise virgins took oil with them. Now the bridegroom was about to come, and the foolish virgins cried to the wise, "Give us your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But the wise virgins replied, saying, "No, there is not enough oil for both of us. Go and buy."

While the foolish were away to buy their oil the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward, the foolish virgins came back saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us !" But he answered saying, "I know you not !"

So we must be ready when the bridegroom (Christ) comes again.

Another example is of Noah. You will find this story in the Old Testament in Genesis, chapters 6-9.

After the Lord had created the earth, He saw it becoming corrupt. But God saw one man who was pure in heart. This man was Noah. One day, God commanded Noah to build a great ark, for God was soon to destroy the earth with water. Noah built the ark just as God had commanded him to do. While he was building the ark, he preached to the people of the destruction of the earth. After years of building, the ark was finished. No one, though, had responded to Noah's warnings. All that were to be saved were Noah, his wife, Shem, Ham, and Japeth (their sons), and their wives.

Now the day had come, and Noah and his family gathered into the ark. God finally shut the great door and it started to rain. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Now the world and its wicked people were destroyed. All that were now living were the inhabitants in the ark and the fish of the sea. After 150 days the waters dried up, and the ark rested on Mt. Ararat. Later God promised that he would not destroy the earth with water

again, but with fire. Here God was speaking of the judgment day when Jesus would come and destroy the earth with vengeance and flaming fire.

When He shall come, He shall come as a thief in the night. (Revelation 16:15). Not even the angels in heaven know when He shall come. (Matthew 24:36).

When the foolish virgins were late, they cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he did not. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not everyone who shall say unto me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Also when the people were not ready after Noah had preached to them, they could not enter the ark because the door had been shut.

We must also be ready when Christ comes again on judgment day. If we are not, then the door to eternal Heaven could be shut to us forever.

Please repent of your sins and be born into God's family. Prepare for judgment day. If you are not a Christian, come and learn how you can become one. Learn about the one true church, Christ's church, the church of Christ.

"Preach The Word"

Ben. F. Vick

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (II Tim. 4:1-2). Soon after writing these words, Paul, the aged, put down the pen of inspiration for the last time. He had been moved by the Holy Spirit to write about thirteen other epistles of the New Testament. But his last was written to the young preacher, Timothy, of whom he had said, "I have no man likeminded...." (Phil. 2:20). It is often the case, when it comes time for a man to go the way of all the earth, that those things which are first in his life will be the last things from his

lips. Such was true with Paul when he wrote "preach the word." These same words in II Timothy were used as the text from which the late and lamented B.C. Goodpasture preached his last sermon at Freed-Hardeman College on February 8, 1977. The title of his lesson was "A Message for Our Time." How fitting was the title! And, yet, II Timothy 4:1-4 is not only a message for our time, but for all time and until time shall be no more. (Rev. 10:6).

These words from Holy Writ are still germane to our day and age because of the all-sufficiency of the scriptures. In preceding verses, Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16-17). The fact that some men deride and deny the inspiration of the Bible today necessitates preaching the word.

The charge to "preach the word" is relevant today because it was made "in the sight of God and of Jesus Christ." It is a "solemn and emphatic utterance" which every preacher must heed. Paul made it with God and Christ as his witnesses. It behooves every preacher to discharge his duty and do so in the right manner, because Christ will one day judge the quick and the dead. (Acts 17:30-31).

"Preach the word" needs to be emphasized more today because too many are de-emphasizing it. In other words, preachers are quoting Trueblood, C.S. Lewis, Barth and others rather than the word of God. Articles are written and sermons are preached filled with personal testimonies rather than quoting from the Bible. Paul wrote, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus." (II Cor. 4:5).

Preachers, listen: Preaching yourself is not preaching Jesus Christ. Paul says to "preach the word." (II Tim. 4:2). Preaching "your faith" is not preaching "the word of faith" (Rom. 10:8); and "sharing your experiences" is not preaching "Christ crucified." (I Cor. 1:23). Preaching the word does not call for speculating upon what is not in the word. (Deut. 29:29;

I Pet. 4:11). Brethren, if the Lord expects (and he does) people to live the Book; then the Book must be preached.

"Preaching the word" means to "preach the gospel." (Mk. 16:15). It means to preach "the faith; i.e., the system of faith. (Gal. 1:23 Jude 3; Eph. 4:13). It means to preach "sound doctrine." (II Tim. 4:3). We are told in Acts 8:5, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Thus, to preach the word means to preach Christ. But in that same account, Luke records, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12). Therefore, to preach the word includes also the preaching of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name (the authority) of Jesus Christ. It means to preach the importance of believing in Christ and also the necessity of baptism in order to receive remission of sins. (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). Preaching the word means to declare the whole counsel of God. (Acts 20:27).

The preaching of the word must "be instant in season, out of season." The American Standard Version says "be urgent in season, out of season." That means preach it when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient; when it is pleasant and not so pleasant. Preachers are to "preach the word" when people like it and when they don't; when they are "amening" and when they are shaking their heads in disapproval. The prophet Ezekiel was told, "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious." (Ezek. 2:6-7).

Preachers, contrary to the thinking of many, are to "reprove." That means "to convict, lay bare, expose, refute, chastise." John the Baptist reprov'd Herod the tetrarch for "Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done." (Lk. 3:19). "For John said unto him. It is not lawful for thee to have her." (Matt. 14:4). Gospel

preaching sometimes entails dealing in specifics and not always in general principle (Röm. 16:17-18).

Gospel preachers are also to "*rebuke*." They are "to reprimand, admonish strongly, and enjoin strictly." Preaching involves the negative. Too many (if there is one, that is too many) "gospel" preachers are patterning their style after the denominational preachers rather than the dictates set down by the apostle Paul.

Paul charged Timothy in his preaching to "*exhort*." He was to "invite by argument or advice." Barnabas was a great exhorter. (Acts 4:36, ASV). Daily exhortation was encouraged by Paul in Hebrews 3:13. All of us need to be exhorted and encouraged in faithful service to God. Paul even told Timothy. "Till I come, give attendance to reading, exhortation, to doctrine." (I Tim. 4:13).

Brethren, preach the word. The Lord demands it; the elders must want it; and all men need it. (I Pet. 2:2; Jas 1:21).

The Shepherds Of Bethlehem

John Waddey

It is sad that the shepherds of Bethlehem are known only as an adjunct to the traditional Christmas story. Rarely is their narrative studied for its own worth, although it contains many valuable lessons.

All we know of these men is recorded in Luke's gospel. (2:8-20). They were unknown peasants whose place in history was made immortal by the events of that night. The year would have been 4 B.C., for Herod the Great died in April of that year.

A shepherd's life and work was hard and demanding. Jacob related his gruelling experience tending Laban's flocks: "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or

stolen by night . . . in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes". (Genesis 21:39-40). David told of delivering a lamb out of the mouth of a lion or a bear. (I Samuel 17:34-36). Shepherding was a 24 hour per day, 7 day a week profession. Equipment and provisions for their work were Spartan. Garments were simple. A rough cloak of sheepskin was worn in bad weather. On their shoulder, they carried a bag or wallet with food and personal items. For protection, there was sling and a rod; and for support, a staff. In foul weather they used a small tent. Each morning, they led their flocks to pasture and at evening they returned to the fold.

Among the ancient Hebrews, shepherding was a vocation, venerable and honourable, hallowed by great ancestors like Jacob, Moses and David. Even the great Jehovah was likened unto a shepherd. (Psalm 23:1). By Jesus' time, the Pharisees and scribes scorned shepherds as common and unclean. The Talmud tells us that they were not allowed in the courts as witnesses. It is interesting that the sheep intended for daily sacrifice at the temple were pastured near Bethlehem.

"And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and they were sore afraid". (Luke 2:9). So great was the message that no less a person was suitable to announce it. The careful student notes that angels attended every step of our Lord's ministry: the annunciation, birth and temptation, the passion, resurrection and ascension. "The glory of the Lord" which shown about them was the Shekinah, the symbol of God's presence seen repeatedly in the Old Testament. (Compare Ezekiel 10:18-19).

It was an humble audience the angels appeared unto : lowly shepherds. Not to kings or princes, not to wealthy merchants or moguls, not to priests or rabbis, but to common folks who truly loved him they came. The birth of our Lord in such lowly circumstances hallowed the common life and allowed the masses of humanity access to the divine priesthood. Today, anyone can be a priest of God who is willing to enter the kingdom. (Revelation 1:6).

It was a thrilling message they brought. (Luke 2:10-11). "Be not afraid," they said. Such a spectacular glory would

leave a soul awestruck and trembling. "There is born to you . . . a Saviour"—what joy these words brought to a Hebrew heart ! The promise of the ages, unfolding now before their very eyes ! His very name, Jesus, meant Savior. (Matthew 1:21). He was not just a political or economic Savior, he was "Christ the Lord", their long-awaited Messiah now come in the flesh.

The angel's message was *good news*, i.e., the "gospel". This was the first gospel message given to mankind. Then and now it brings great joy to all who receive it. Even to this moment, no joy is comparable to that of the gospel of Jesus. It is for all people, not just for the Jews. A new age had arrived, good news for all nations, they could be saved by Christ. (Mark 16:15-16). The *theme* of their gospel was "a Savior is born." If this central theme is neglected, our preaching is no longer *gospel*, no matter how eloquent. Their message was *confirmed by a sign*. They would find a baby "wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." God's ways are strange to men. This was not at all what Jews were expecting of their Messiah : perhaps an angel, a king or a warrior, but never a helpless babe !

The angels praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest," i.e., *in heaven*. Truly his coming has caused millions to give God the glory for his love and salvation. (John 3:16). "*On earth* peace among men in whom he is well pleased." What a welcome, joyful message was this in a world torn by strife and hatred. How beautiful, even today. Among the Hebrews there was a festive celebration when a child was born. God provided his own minstrels to celebrate the birth of his Son in that austere situation.

We see their *faith* in the divine message. We mark their *obedience* to the divine charge to seek out the child. We admire their *zeal* in sharing their good news with others (vs. 20). There is a contagion about the gospel. A heart truly touched by it can never hold it in. Each of us like Legion should "declare how great things God hath done for me [us]". (Luke 8:39). We should not overlook the fact that these men were busy, tending their common duties when God's message came. One cannot be pleasing to the Father who is negligent of his daily responsibilities.

The "glory of the Lord" did not appear at the temple where were the professional priests whose hearts had long grown cold; rather it came to the warm, receptive hearts of humble shepherds.

The Savior's humble birth served at least two purposes; it made known to the race the supreme love of Christ's condensation (II Corinthians 8:9), and it concealed the greatest event of the ages from the wicked who would have sought to thwart the divine plan.

Francis of Assisi wrote, "For our sakes he was born a stranger in an open stable; he lived without a place of his own wherein to lay his head, subsisting by the charity of good people; and he died naked on a cross in the close embrace of holy poverty." It is a marvel that a cradle too poor for a child was fitting for God's Son. Where normally lay food for beasts now lay the bread of life to feed a hungry race of men. (John 6:48-57). No man will complain about his poor clothes or shelter if he remembers the swaddling clothes and manger of our Lord. How much we owe him who sacrificed so much for us !

The Almighty Son of God as a helpless babe was a type of his coming kingdom, apparently helpless in the world of powerful kingdoms, yet more powerful enduring than all. (Matthew 13:31-32).

Christ's birth was a real historic event, not a myth or fable like those of pagan religions. Dates and places are given. Eyewitnesses verified the facts.

May each of us respond to the good news of Christ as did those shepherds. Let us seek out the Savior; let us tell everyone all we have seen and heard of him and let us praise and glorify our God all the days of our lives.

Working With God

Ancil Jenkins

I heard once of a little girl who was afraid of the dark. One night her mother told her to go on the back porch and get the

broom. The girl, wanting to obey her mother, was still full of anxiety. "Don't be afraid," her mother told her, "The Lord is everywhere and he will protect you."

The little girl opened the back door and closed her eyes. Reaching out her hand she said, "Lord if you're there, please hand me the broom."

We may smile at the young girl. Yet we all may have had the feeling at one time that if the Lord is supposed to be with us, why doesn't he do more? This is partly explained by Paul's statement that we are labourers together with God. (1 Corinthians 3:9). This relationship is somewhat like a see-saw. By working together, we can accomplish almost anything. By ourselves, we can do nothing, and neither can God. This is not to say his power is limited. However, he can accomplish nothing in our lives without the surrender of our will.

If your life seems powerless, if you feel like a person on a see-saw by yourself, give God a little cooperation.

Problems Of Prayer

By James Meadows

Many theories advanced by man created problems in prayer for some. Many do not ask "What does the Bible say and promise about prayer," but "is it possible for God to answer prayer?" *First*, one theory argues that the unchangeableness of God renders prayer ineffective. God has always been unchangeable. (Jas. 1:17; Heb. 13:8), but such did not keep him from answering prayers in the past; why should it now? *Second*, another theory says miracles have ceased, which is true (I Cor. 13:8-13), and God cannot answer a prayer without a miracle and without violating his natural law. This theory is based on an assumption, because one would have to know everything about God's natural laws to prove it. Let us not be so presumptuous as to assume that we have learned all of God's natural laws and how they operate. A *third* theory argues that the omniscience

of God renders prayers unnecessary. True, God does know all our need (Matt. 6:24-34) but he still wants us to ask. (Matt. 7:7-12; Jas. 4:1-3). *Fourth*, the reflex theory argues that reflex influence is the only benefit one receives from prayer. But if reflex influence constitutes the sum total of prayer's benefits then what advantage has a Christian over a heathen? "In the very nature of the case the reflex influence is good only when we sincerely pray to one whom we believe hears us and is willing and able to grant us the desires of our heart". (Gus Nichols). *Fifth*, Christians often say, "Some of my religious neighbors make too much of prayer. They have fashioned it into a substitute for many commands of Christ." Beloved, should we begin to go out the window because some use the door? In other words, should we quit praying because some have abused and misused prayer?

Fourth, some problems arise in prayer because of one's failure to recognize and remove hinderances to one's prayer. First, hypocrisy hinders prayer. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward". (Matt. 6:5, 6). Hypocrisy (*Hypokrisis*) "primarily denotes a reply, an answer . . . then play acting, as the actors spoke in dialogue; hence, pretence, hypocrisy . . . (W.E. Vine). *First*, the prayer of the hypocrite is deception. He deceives his fellow-man. He prays to be seen of men while pretending piety, but they are deceived. He deceives himself. He gets what he seeks—the praise of men—but it is inconsiderate, fickle and short-lived. He receives nothing from God as he thinks. *Second*, the hypocrite's prayer is idolatry. He does not pray to the true God, but has made himself his God and men his idols, whose praise he seeks. In seeking the praise of men he puts their approval in competition with the favour and approval of God. Such is, in effect to say, my interest is in myself rather than the one to whom I am praying. Some of the so-called "beautiful prayers" of today might fall in this category. "When a man thinks more of how he is praying than of what he is praying, his prayer dies upon his lips". (William Barclay).

Second, vain repetitions hinder prayer. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetition, as the heathen do: for they think that

they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask him". (Matt. 6:7, 8). Our Lord does not condemn repetition itself because he used the same words three times in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:24). "Vain repetition" is from *battalogein* which means "to stammer, stutter, then to babble or prate, to repeat the same formula many times." "Vain repetitions" imply a multitude of words without thought—"they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Third, sin can be a hindrance to prayer. The Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me". (Psa. 64:18; cf. Isa. 59:1, 2).

Fourth, selfishness constitutes one of the greatest hindrances to prayer. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts". (Jas. 4:1-3). Sometimes we do not have what we want because we ask it in the wrong way (v. 2a) or we do not ask for it. (v. 2b; cf. Matt. 7:7). At other times our prayers are selfish and God will not grant a request where the purpose is to fulfill selfish desires. To ask *amiss* "is to be influenced by low, mean, selfish considerations . . . It is possible for one to pray for ability to serve others when the chief reason for the desire is not the welfare of man, but lust for power, fame, notoriety, etc." (Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary On the Epistle of James*, Nashville : Gospel Advocate Co., 1964, p. 206).

Fifth, prayer can be hindered by family trouble. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered". (I Pet. 3:7). The word "hindered" is the rending of a word which means literally "to cut in, to interrupt." Strife and discord in a home cut off and interrupt prayer—"the message to heaven is short-circuited."

PROBLEMS IN PRAYER

First, lack of faith is one of the greatest problems in prayer. James said, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering . . ." (Jas. 1:6a). Faith means taking God at his word in the face of impossible odds. God's promise to give Abraham a son, at the time his own body was as good as dead and Sarah's womb was barren (Rom. 4:19), seemed impossible. But "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able to perform". (Rom. 4:20, 21). God encourages us to "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:14-16) and to ask and receive the petitions asked according to his will. (I Jn. 3:22; 5:14, 15).

Praying in faith means faith that God is. The Atheist cannot pray because he has no God to whom he can pray. The Pantheist cannot pray because his God is an infinite IT. The Agnostic cannot pray because he doesn't know whether there is a God or not. The Christian can pray because he believes that God is "and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". (Heb. 11:6). The problem here, if it arises, is not on God's part but ours. It is lack of faith in God's power to do things. It is failure to believe that prayer has power. Instead of excusing our neglect, when we do not pray, why not be honest and say, "I have no faith or little faith, therefore I see nothing in prayer." "We walk by faith, not by sight". (II Cor. 5:7). Faith comes by hearing God's word. (Rom. 10:17). God's word says, "but let him ask in faith . . ." (Jas. 1:6). This is sufficient for the faithful child of God.

How To Change Your Hurtful Mental Attitude For The Better

W.A. Holley

Take a good, hard, honest look at yourself. "Examine yourselves," saith the Scriptures. (II Corinthians 13:5; I Corinthians 11:28). What do you see? A person who is reasonably happy

and satisfied and contented? or a person who is frustrated, balky, angry, and dissatisfied? Are you afraid to think positively? Are you afraid to trust the Lord's promises? (Matthew 6:19-34).

Develop a burning desire to build a wholesome outlook upon life. There is no need to sour on the world! It will not hurt you to try real hard to smile. Never withdraw into a shell, saying that there is no use in trying to improve yourself, because you think matters simply cannot be changed. How about reading the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 33:25; Philippians 4:13, 19. If you will but try, you can do something for yourself. (II Peter 1:5-11; Matthew 7:7-12).

If you will but become a Christian, you will not be alone: the Lord will be with you; he will help you bear your burdens, and thus, make it possible for you to live acceptably despite your handicaps or problems. (II Corinthians 4:8-9; Psalm 46:1ff; Hebrews 13:5-6; Matthew 28:18-20).

View yourself as a happy, active, likeable, loving, helpful, capable, and cheerful person. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". (Proverbs 23:7). Someone has said, "Smile and the world smiles with you; cry and you cry alone." Thus, seek to build a new image of yourself!

If you wish to change your hurtful attitude for the better, force yourself to look on the bright side of life. One can look up and see the stars, or one can look down and see the mud! Things may not be as bad as you may think! You have observed that even storms, floods, hardships, and sickness will soon pass away. Talk to yourself and say, "It is a good morning," every day. To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each to you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you . . ." (Philippians 2:2-5).

Make a special effort to learn from the past. All wise persons do. Strive not to make the same mistake twice. Surely life has taught you something! Why worry about things which never happen? Fear is a terrible master. Most storms which one worries about never come to pass. Most of our lions turn out to be kittens and many of our obstacles are blessings in disguise. If you are not a Christian, become one today. If you have been a Christian, but now have blundered and fallen by the wayside, repent of your sins, ask God to forgive you, and then forgive yourself, and forget, as much as possible, past mistakes. (Acts 17:30; II Peter 3:9; Philippians 3:13-14).

Open your eyes and look about you. "Count your blessings, name them one by one." You are richer than you think. You have clothes to wear, food to eat, a bed to sleep in, friends to encourage you, and life itself—the greatest of all blessings as far as earthly possessions are concerned. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful". (Colossians 3:15). I challenge you to compose a list of ten blessings which you would not wish to lose.

Do a lot of praying. Realize that God talks to you through the words of the Bible. The only way you can talk to God is through earnest and sincere prayer. Of course, you must be a child of God in order to be able to address him as your Father. (Matthew 6:9-13; John 8:44; I Jno. 3:10; Romans 10:1). Do you think that there is no one who prays for you? Would that not be all the more reason why you should pray for yourself? Is it not possible for us to pray for all others but ourselves? Jesus was a man of prayer: "Thy will, and not mine, be done," manifests the proper attitude. Paul, a man of prayer, stated the following conviction, saying, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen". (II Timothy 4:18). Exercise your faith !!

Read your Bible daily, Set up a reading schedule which will carry you through the Bible each year. In addition, do extra reading as well. (Isaiah 34:16; II Timothy 2:15; I Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 5:11-16). Bible instruction will help you solve many personality and emotional problems. In fact, any

psychological or psychiatric advice or instruction that is contrary to the teaching of the Bible would be sinful. Our "mind" needs to be "renewed" day by day. (Romans 12:1-2). "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ". (II Corinthians 10:5). If you will but read Philippians 4:8, you will learn that there are some good things to think about.

Raise the estimate of your worth to yourself, to your nation, to your family, and to the church of Christ.

What are you worth in terms of character, or money, or example ?? Are you a blessing to the world or a curse ? What contributions do you make toward improving the church attendance ? its financial standing ? its reputation in the community ? Do you throw cold water on all people and all programs, no matter how worthy ? Jesus realized that his disciples could lose their "saltiness" and thus become "good for nothing". (Matthew 5:13-14).

If you will but think of yourself in terms of service to others, you will then begin to see how valuable you are to yourself and to others as well. Service to others will bestow upon you the sense of accomplishment and fulfilment. You can make a telephone call to an aged person, visit sick and lonely persons in nursing homes, send a get-well card to one in the hospital, speak a word of encouragement to the down-trodden, warn a wayward boy or girl of the dangers of wordliness, and tell a lost person the Lord's plan of salvation.

I once read a proverb which was said to be German in origin: "What I spent I had. What I saved I lost. What I gave I have."

Whatever you give in service to Christ and to others—of your hopes, your enthusiasms, your tears, your labors, your words, your good needs—that and that alone is yours, and yours forever. (Cf. Matthew 10:41-42).

"Cast thy bread upon the water : for thou shalt find it after many days". (Ecclesiastes 11:1). This passage suggests that good deeds done unselfishly for others not only do good to the one for

whom they are done, but return in blessings upon the head of the doer.

Together We Have Strength

Raymond Elliott

A friend of mine was relating to me how that during World War II a squadron of B-17s was nearly indivisible while flying bombing raids over enemy targets. He mentioned that the enemy fighter planes were in the air constantly but would not attack the squadron because of its fire power. Only when a plane in the squadron became disabled in any manner and fell out of the formation did it become vulnerable to the opposing planes. Together the squadron of B-17s protected each other. But when one aircraft lagged behind, it was usually destroyed immediately.

There is somewhat an analogy contained in this illustration. When Christians have the moral support of one another, it is very difficult for a member to be lost to Satan. However, the Christian who falls behind through indifference and negligence soon becomes easy prey for the devil who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (I Peter 5:8).

Our heavenly Father, in his infinite wisdom knowing that man was a social being, provided in his scheme of redemption the bringing together of his people in public worship. This is clearly set forth in Hebrews 10:24,25 : "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh." In the light of this context that we are to consider one another, the exhortation is given not to forsake the assemblies of the saints. Other than the adoration given to God, the next important reason given for the assemblies is to exhort one another. It is encouraging and strengthening to the Christian when one is faithful in attendance to the various gathering of the local congregation. It is very unlikely that one would ever become unfaithful to God if he is faithful in his presence to these

assemblies. It isn't that he couldn't. It's just that he will not want to leave his Lord and his body.

But one of the first signs of a brother or sister becoming unfaithful is the slow but steady decline in the attendance of the various periods of Bible study and worship. When a Christian "falls out of the formation" and begins to lag behind, separating himself from the other members, you can just about know that he is going to be "shot down" by the "fiery darts of the evil one". (Ephesians 6:16).

While assembling to worship God is not the sum total of Christianity, it is an essential ingredient in the Christian's harmonious relationship with his Saviour.

You May Have Quit Already

An elder who was quite wise and who loved deeply the souls of men went one day to visit a member who did not attend any more. He asked the member why he had quit the church. The surprised reply was, "I haven't quit!" The elder then asked gently, "What would you be doing differently if you did quit?"

Many quit who will not admit they have. "The people aren't friendly enough so, let's go elsewhere," is a common excuse. These people don't do well at other churches either. People who would rather be at home than Bible Study or Worship have already quit! They have quit loving Jesus. Those who love Jesus love his people. They are friendly and involved themselves and do not depend on others to keep them happy. Jesus keeps them happy. (Phil. 4:13).

People are unfaithful who fail to attend services, who will not give moral support to the church, who fail to give to carry on the work of the local congregation, etc. They have quit Christ, because the love of Christ makes us want to do and to love. (II Cor. 5:14). Those who would dare blame the faithful for their own unfaithfulness should consider that God will judge them severely for this. (Mt. 7:1-5). The next time you are tempted to make the excuse that "they" (the church) aren't friendly, or "they" don't please me, consider that you have quit Christ. Otherwise, you wouldn't be talking in terms of "they" but rather "us". (Gal. 3:28).

If you have quit, why not repent and come back? God awaits (Lk. 15), and the church loves. Otherwise, we wouldn't be concerned about your soul and write this article.

—Selected

Which Is Worse ?

Bob Duncan

Occasionally one who is determined to persist in some sin will ask if that sin is worse than some other specific sin. We have always had little patience with that kind of question. Such a question seems to imply that one makes a mistake in condemning any specific sin unless he also specifically names every other sin. It also seems to imply that common ordinary sins which are no worse than other common ordinary sins are not really very bad, and should not be condemned.

But we might do well to ask, which is worse : the sin of Judas who betrayed the Lord for money, or the sin of Pilate who had not the courage to release him, though he knew he was guilty of no crime? With Judas it was a matter of money; with Pilate it was a matter of popularity. Which is worse? Judas delivered Jesus into the hands of his enemies; Pilate refused to deliver Jesus out of the hands of his enemies. Which is worse?

Judas represents all those who, for the love of money, turn their backs on the Lord and engage in all kinds of activities which are contrary to his will. Pilate represents those who have it within their power to wield an influence for good in behalf of the cause of Christ, but who choose not to do so for fear it might jeopardize their popularity. Which is worse?

Judas felt the weight of the responsibility for his action, but instead of repenting, he allowed remorse to overcome him, and went and hanged himself. Pilate refused to accept the responsibility for his actions. He took a pan of water and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude. No repentance or remorse on his part is ever clearly indicated. He sinned with no compunction of conscience.

Who committed the greater sin, Judas or Pilate? I am not reluctant to say I do not know. I do know this : I would not trade places with either of them for the world and all its wealth. Both their names occupy a place of infamy in the annals of men; both of them will suffer the torments of hell eternally.

But what about the person in our own time who allows his craving for worldly things—money, popularity, social standing, etc.—to turn him away from his duty to the Lord of Glory? Which sin is worse : that of Judas, that of Pilate, or that of this man?

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