

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

Some of the best known characters in the Bible are Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Being two sisters and a brother, they lived together in a house in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem. Nothing is said of any of them being married. We know little about them, except for the occasions that their lives came into contact with Jesus. Where Jesus had met them and how they became friends is not known, but from what is said, they seemed to have known one another well and to have felt at ease in each other's presence. For sure, they had a great love for each other.

We remember Mary for her desire to hear the Lord's word and for her great devotion to him. Martha was a good woman but one who seemed to be burdened down with house work. Then, of course, Lazarus died and Jesus raised him from the grave. There are many valuable lessons to be learned from these people and I invite you to think about some of them,

In Luke 10:38-42 we read of Jesus coming into the village of Bethany and to the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. From the context, evidently Jesus already knew these sisters well. Nothing is said in this setting about Lazarus being present, but surely he was. The scriptures indicate that Mary was intrigued with Jesus and the things that he had to say. Surely she was not neglecting her work because she was lazy, but she had a genuine interest in listening to Jesus. Martha, on the other hand, went on with her work, making preparations of hospitality for the thirteen or more adult visitors in her home. This is one reason why we would assume that Jesus was known to them prior to this occasion. Not only did Martha miss the help of Mary but in this case even complained to Jesus about it. Jesus then mildly rebuked Martha for being, so busy with her daily tasks, but commended Mary for doing the needful thing, that is, for taking the time to hear what he had to say. We can see that the lesson of priorities is brought out in this setting. Mary put the Lord and his word before all else and Jesus commended her for it.

Surely the lesson here for us would be that we need to know Jesus, we need to obey him, and the result would be that spiritual things would come before everything else. When we get bogged down with the matters of this world, whether it be our job, school work, or a thousand other things, we are making a very bad mistake. We may be morally good, have good intentions, and all of that, but we must put first things first.

The second incident involving Mary, Martha, and Lazarus is found in John 11:1-46. Here we have Lazarus becoming sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus, thinking, perhaps, that he would come and heal him. But instead, Jesus chose to stay where he was for two additional days. He probably knew that if he went, he would be expected to heal Lazarus. But by staying where he was, and with Lazarus dying then he could go to him, raise him from the dead, and many would believe. This is what happened.

After two days, Jesus told the disciples of his desire to go to Bethany where Lazarus was but they were afraid to do this because of fanatics in that area who had threatened Jesus' life. Still, Jesus insisted that they go. Near to Bethany, Martha, and

later, Mary, came out to meet him. Both reminded him that if he had been there, their brother would not have died. The Lord responded by saying that Lazarus only slept and that he would rise again. Martha said that she knew that he would rise in the resurrection at the last day, and then "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live . . ." (John 11:25).

During this time, many Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary concerning their brother. When Jesus saw this, and how Mary was weeping, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. He then asked where they had laid Lazarus, and they invited him to come to see. Then Jesus wept. Someone has said that in addition to feeling the grief in the sisters' hearts, perhaps he wept when he thought of Lazarus having lived his life, and how he had gone to be with God in heaven, but now he would be called back to this sinful world and to all of the temptations and problems of life. This could certainly have been true. Anyway, it shows Jesus' great love and compassion for this good man and his family.

The Jews knew of Jesus' love for Lazarus and wondered why he had not healed him. They said that surely a man who was able to do the miracles Jesus had done could also have prevented Lazarus' death.

At the tomb, Jesus asked that the stone be rolled away from the entrance. Martha pleaded that this should not be done since Lazarus had been dead for four days and that his body was already decaying. But Jesus reminded her that he had told her that if she would believe, she would see the glory of God.

Jesus called upon his Father to hear him; The record says that he did this for the benefit of those present, that they might know that God had sent him. When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." Someone said that he specifically called Lazarus by name or, otherwise, all the dead would have come forth. But when he spoke the words, Lazarus responded, coming out of the grave. Jesus commanded them to

loose him. Looking on, seeing this astounding miracle, many Jews believed but some went to the Pharisees to tell them what had happened.

What a powerful and moving story. Surely the lessons to be learned from this would be of the love and compassion of Jesus for each individual, of his power over death, and of the confidence and hope that he gives to those who will believe in him.

Finally, in John 12:1-11 and Mark 14:1-9 we have Jesus visiting in the home of Simon the Leper who also lived in Bethany. On this occasion Lazarus and his sisters were present for the supper Simon made for Jesus. Again, Martha was very busy serving but "Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair." We are told that this ointment came from a plant that grew in the Himalayas, that it cost 300 pence, about a year's wages. Judas Iscariot, the disciple who kept the money bag, complained that this ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. The record says that it was not that he cared for the poor but the fact was that he was a thief.

Jesus did not find fault with what Mary did. Instead, he praised her for it. He reminded those present that the poor would be with them always but that he would not always be with them. He explained that Mary had anointed his body in preparation for his forthcoming burial, and he declared that wherever the gospel would be preached in the world, what Mary had done would be told as a memorial of her.

The record goes on to say that many of the Jews knew that Jesus was at Simon's house, and they came not to see Jesus only but also to see Lazarus, the man who had been raised from the dead. The chief priests even discussed how they might put Lazarus to death because many of the Jews had believed on Jesus because of him.

What lessons would be here for us? First, we see how Jesus was honored in this home. He should likewise be honored in ours, as Lord and Master. Second, Mary offered to Jesus what

she had. When we come to really believe in the Lord, we will give to him ourselves and all that we have. When we hold back and refuse to give all of ourselves, being selfish with our material things and wanting to keep most of what we have for ourselves, then we still have a long way to go in being what the Lord would have us to be. But think of what Mary did, and because of her deed of love her name will forever be remembered. When we do what we can the Lord will remember us.

Do you believe in Jesus? How much do you believe in him? How are you showing your faith? Jesus will save, bless, and honor you when you put him first in your life.



**associate
editorial**

Some Things You Should Know About the Church of Christ

You should know that this is the only church about which you can read in the Bible. Christ has said, "I will build MY church." (Matthew 16:18). In Ephesians 1:23 Paul said the church is the body of Christ, and then at 1 Corinthians 12:27 he said to Christians, "Now you are the body of Christ." Since the body is the church therefore in saying, now you are the body of Christ, he was actually saying, you are the church of Christ. In His letter to the Romans Paul wrote, "The churches of Christ greet you." (Romans 16:16). Notice, he said, "The churches of Christ greet you." Christ had promised to build His own church, and he did likewise. (Acts 2). He established no other Church.

You should know that the church of Christ is neither Catholic nor Protestant. It is neither sectarian nor denominational or interdenominational. There were no Catholics and Protestants in the first century when it was written, "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (Acts 11:26). Just as all Christians were then in the church of Christ so are they today in the same church. Just as then "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved," (Acts 2:47), He does the same today.

You should know that the church of Christ has neither earthly headquarters nor an earthly head. According to the Bible, Christ alone is the head of His body, which is His church. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). The Headquarters of His church is in heaven, where He is now and from where He rules. (Philippians 3:20,21). All congregations of Christ's church are independent, yet they are all one in faith and together constitute the one body of Christ on earth. They are all endeavoring to keep or maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, by following the one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, as the apostle Paul had admonished. (Ephesians 4:3, 4).

You should know that there is no special Priesthood in the church of Christ. There is no clergy and laity system. We are not living today under the Old Testament Law of Moses where special Priests were chosen for offering prayers and sacrifices for the sins of the people. But we are living today under the New Testament law of Christ and it teaches us that Christ is our High Priest and we as Christians, all Christians, are a Priesthood under Him. (Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:5,9). Today, as Christians and Priests we ourselves can offer our prayers and sacrifices to Him. It is, therefore, evident that no special class of Clergy marked by titles, collars, or robes is necessary today.

You should know that preachers of the church of Christ are not called "Reverend" or "Pastor" or by any other titles which exalt men above others. You can read your Bible from Genesis to Revelation and in the whole Bible you will find the word Reverend only once, yes, only one time, and there the writer has used this word for God and said, "Holy and reverend is His

name." (Psalm 111:9, K.J.V.). In the New King James version this verse reads, "Holy and awesome is His name." And the Revised Standard Version says, "Holy and terrible is His name." God's, not man's, name is Reverend, His name is awesome, and His name alone is fearful. A preacher is a man, he is not God. Also, we do read of Pastors in the Bible, but not all preachers were called Pastors. Pastors were those who were elders in the church and they were also known as shepherds, bishops, and overseers. (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1,2; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They were to serve as overseers and shepherd the church of the Lord. Pastoring and preaching are two different kind of works. The work of a preacher is to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2), and Pastors are to serve as overseers in the church. (1 Peter 5:1,2). Preachers are not Pastors. For qualifications of a Pastor see 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

You should know that in the worship services of the church of Christ on every first day of the week (Sunday), you will hear no shouting, screaming or any other manifestation or unbridled emotions, and no one acts in any abnormal fashion. The admonition of 1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order," is sincerely followed. The church of Christ everywhere meets on each first day of the week for observing the Lord's Supper, just as the Christians did almost two thousand years ago in the days of the apostles. (Acts 20:7). In the same manner, every Christian is encouraged to give from his income on every first day of the week according to his income or as he has been prospered by the Lord. (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). This eliminates tithing, which again was an Old Testament requirement. No special sales or fetes are organized by the church for raising money for work of the church. Also, you will hear no sound of any musical instrument accompanying the singing of the church in her services. It is because the Christians want to worship God today in the same manner as they did in the first century. Christians are commanded to sing and make melody or music in their heart. (Ephesians 5:19).

You should know also that the church of Christ does not observe any special religious days simply because there is no authority for

doing so in the New Testament of Christ. We give heed to the Lord's warning, "If any one adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18,19).

The Bible says that Christ not only built the church, but He also loved His church so much that He, "gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27). You should, therefore, know that Christ is going to return one day to receive His church. All who believe in Him with all their heart, and repent of their sins, and confess Him to be the Lord and the Son of God, and are baptized in His name for the forgiveness of sins, He adds them to His church. You too can become a member of the church of Christ. Write to us for more information.

Judgment and the Household of God

Karl Jones

Because the Christian has taken his stand with Jesus, he is automatically an enemy of Satan and this world. Consequently, Jesus warned, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

Hate. That's how Satan and this world view the child of God, so it is not surprising that Satan attacks. Subtly, yet ferociously, and always with untiring persistence he attacks. He never misses an opportunity to weaken, hurt or discourage the Christian.

Persecution was Satan's first frontal attack on the early church. The threat of suffering caused many to turn back from following Christ. The early Christians desperately needed a faith

that would endure patiently and steadfastly no matter what—just as we do today.

Facing the threat and peril of suffering, Peter wrote to encourage and exhort believers to be aware that persecutions and suffering were coming and to be ready to stand firm at all costs. This is the thrust of much in 1 Peter, particularly 1 Peter 4:12-19.

These verses are clear, with the exception of verse 17, which says, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

The idea of judgment beginning with the household of God in the midst of a context of suffering seems a little confusing. Some possible explanations are provided.

(1) It is time for the final judgment to begin. This implies that the final judgment was impending when Peter wrote. Chapter 4:7 could be cited in support of this view.

(2) When the time for the final judgment begins, it will start with the house of God. This implies that the time is certain to be, but when it will be is uncertain.

(3) The present suffering marks the beginning of the final judgment. Though agonizing and inexplicable, these trials are the opening phase in the unfolding of God's plan for the end. The "appointed season" has arrived, and judgment begins with the family of God.

(4) The time of judgment or crisis or severe trials had come for the Christians in the form of intense suffering. In this sense, verse 17 restates verse 12, "Don't be surprised at the coming trials The time for these 'trials' has come."

While it is natural and usual to assume that the mention of judgment refers to the final judgment, it certainly could mean something else, as suggested in the last possibility mentioned. The strengths and weaknesses of these four possible interpretations are as follows.

The strength of the first interpretation is that it seems natural. It sounds as if judgment is about to begin, thus Christians must not waver or give up now. However, the glaring weaknesses are that final judgment did not occur; it hasn't after 1,900 years, and there's no conclusive evidence it will be "soon".

The strengths of the second are that the New Testament repeatedly affirms the certainty of judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10), that all, both righteous and wicked, will be judged (John 5:28,29; Revelation 20:10-15), and the time when this will be is unknowable (Matthew 24:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1,2).

It also can be seen how this view fits the context. Because the final judgment is coming someday, and the ungodly or those who renege on their commitment to Christ will have no chance for salvation, it is imperative for Christians to remain faithful in view of all suffering, in order to be safe and secure when the final judgment does come. Chapter 4:5 affirms that God is ready to judge, yet He postpones judgment (Romans 2:3-10; 2 Peter 3:9).

The weakness of this view, however, is that the verse implies judgment is near—"it is time for judgment to begin." The whole force of verse 17, as well as the immediate context of verses 12-19, is immediate and urgent, rather than future. The commitment and determination to endure suffering is imperative, for indeed the time of testing already had come on the house of God (1 Peter 1:6,7). The persecutions that had begun were unfortunately a foretaste of more to come.

The strength of the third view is that the concept of preparatory or "initiated" judgment is found in the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 25:29; Ezekiel 4:6; Malachi 3:1-6). Further, this judgment also is seen as beginning from the house or temple of God (Ezekiel 9:6). Malachi tells of a messenger who will prepare the way, and John's ministry was acknowledged as a type of preparatory judgment (Matthew 3:1-12).

The strength of the fourth view is that it most naturally fits within the context of verses 12-19 and allows the meaning to stand as it is worded, "It is time for judgment to begin, and it will begin

with God's family." God's family, the church, is "first" to suffer, the implication being that the disobedient and unbeliever also will be tested, judged or experience suffering. Herein lie the contrast and the point.

The faithful in Christ who suffer will receive joy (v. 13), blessings and glory (v. 14), and the assurance of giving glory to God (v. 16). The unbelieving, however, who also will inevitably experience testing and judging, have no such promises. Their suffering is meaningless and will go without compensation. In fact, it will yield greater untold suffering eventually.

The word for judgment found here in verse 17 is *kirma* and means the decision of the judge as an action (Acts 24:25; Hebrews 6:2; 2 Peter 2:3). It was not normally used in the sense of "crisis". However, it may be used here in the sense of the judgment or sentence made by the world on Christianity. Rejection and persecution were the world's judgment on Christianity. This agrees with the context and the point Peter is making.

If judgment begins with Christians—and it has—what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel and trust in God? It is infinitely better to endure the wrath of man than the anger of God. If you suffer for righteousness' sake, "you are blessed" (3:14); if you seek escape from suffering for righteousness in this life, it places one in the company of those who will meet the righteous anger of God.

The nature of the world's verdict on Christianity makes salvation difficult (v. 18), not in the sense that one barely will squeeze by with the grace of God, but in the sense that the Christian's life is difficult. Holy living is difficult to achieve. The example of Christ's treatment by men was one of unjust, unfair, nearly unbearable suffering (2:20,21). Spouses, employers and associates are not always understanding and often are harsh to Christians (2:18,19; 3:1-5). Christians are slandered and reviled (3:16,17; 2:12; 4:4). Satan prowls about (5:8), and suffering is inevitable (5:8-10). The way to heaven is cross-bearing, sacrificing and suffering. It is difficult to safely reach the shores of heaven.

Not only in 1 Peter is this theme prevalent, but all through the New Testament as well. "In the world you have tribulation" (John 16:33). "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "For indeed when we were with you, are kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know" (1 Thessalonians 3:4). "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). "For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3,4).

Satan and this world make it difficult; he is the declared, unmerciful enemy. Yet, all the trouble and suffering are well worth it. But this is not so for the disobedient and ungodly. Their lives, which may appear more free of suffering and trouble, gain them nothing. They will experience the ultimate suffering of separation from God and will pay the penalty of eternal destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

What then is the Christian to do? Whether in the first or the 20th century, he cannot turn back or give up, no matter how intense the suffering. Giving in to suffering and trials means that Satan wins, God loses and the Christian forfeits glory, joy and his very life. The only answer is what is supplied in verse 19: "Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

Trust God. The suffering will end after a little while (5:10), and with it will dawn "praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:7-9).

Love of Truth and Love of Brethren

Curtis R. Dowdy

Love of truth and love of brethren are at a premium. We are

to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3 KJV). We are to "love one another" (John 13:34 KJV).

Much has been written regarding the correct understanding of Matthew 18:15-18. Some have said the passage demands one go to his brother if he feels that brother has not taught the truth on some matter, but has taught publicly (by either speaking or writing) that which the other brother believes is error. Others have said the passage is speaking of a private situation only, so one is not under any obligation to go to the individual unless there is a personal trespass. A correct understanding of the passage in its context will show it is indeed a private and personal matter.

What does love demand? John recorded,

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34,35 KJV).

If one has spoken or written that which is incorrect, that which is in error according to the scriptures, do we as brothers and sisters have a responsibility to correct the error? Does love demand not only that we answer and correct the error but that we do all that we can to assist, to help, to instruct that brother, who no doubt taught what he taught in sincerity, believing it to be the truth? Should an attempt not first be made in that direction?

In describing love, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says it "suffereth long, and is kind; . . . is not puffed up, . . . is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (KJV). I want to underscore the phrase "suffereth long, and is kind."

Too, consider that it is not something that is puffed up. Sometimes I fear that some who are endeavoring to correct do so out of personal pride. If so, then that within itself is wrong. I

make this judgment on the basis of the glib way I have heard it done, where there was a harshness, a righteous tone without tears.

The next thing I want to underscore is that love "hopeth all things". Should we hope that the brother, who has spoken or written that which we believe to be in error, can be corrected if we show love for him by sitting down and personally writing or talking with the individual before we put him on the defensive? If he is in error it would be much easier for him to correct his teaching if it is done privately. I cite the case of Apollos. Priscilla and Aquilla, having heard him teach publicly that which was error, took him aside and taught him more perfectly the way (Acts 18:24-26). I suppose if they had appealed to Matthew 18 alone they would have taken him to task right then and there in front of God and everyone else. For some reason they did not.

We need to remember that mercy, kindness and love make demands upon us. Why? These principles operate under the gospel. We must look at our own hearts. Is our purpose pure? Have we taken into consideration the damage we might do a brother should we expose publicly without first expending every possible avenue of reclaiming and helping because we love our brother?

Am I appealing for softness on error? No, not at all. Nevertheless, I am appealing for an application of the Golden Rule. Why not? What harm will it do? Too, because we can't know the hearts of men today as did Jesus, His apostles and prophets and because we are not inspired interpreters, we ought to be very careful with souls. The attitude expressed by Jesus the Christ as He shed tears over brothers in error at Jerusalem should be the attitude of brothers today.

If after a careful study with absolutely no doubt that it is a matter of faith and not opinion and if after "strong crying and tears", one still refuses to correct his error, which flies into the face of plain scripture, other passages must be applied. However, that is another study.

Love of truth and love of brethren are at a premium, indeed.

Can we afford anything less than our best effort in order to maintain the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? Absolutely not! Then we must approach one another "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2 KJV). May we join the Hebrew writer who wrote, "And this will we do, if God permit".

The Quest for Genuine Happiness

G.F. Raines

The quest for genuine happiness is universal and incessant, but most people fail to find it.

The experience of humanity has convincingly underscored the fact that real happiness is based upon much more than material security. Solomon says: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity." (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

John D. Rockefeller said: "The poorest man I know is the one who has nothing but money." Truly, "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth". (Luke 12:15).

True happiness is found only by walking in God's ways. Henry Ward Beecher observed that, "The strength and the happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way, too."

To walk in God's way, we must walk in the light of God's word in the Holy Bible, because God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9); and, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12).

Jeremiah said: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23).

The apostle Paul, having pointed out the truth that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7) and that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), said: "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." (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

It has been well said that, "Happiness is neither within us only, or without us; it is the union of ourselves with God." (Pascal).

To have real happiness we must have "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:6, 7), and to have this incomparable peace of mind we must work righteousness; that is, we must obey God's commandments. An inspired Hebrew psalmist said: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172).

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17).

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isaiah 57:20,21).

The apostle Peter says: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil". (1 Peter 3:10-12).

John says: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14).

If you want to know what you must do to be saved and to enjoy real happiness, please read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

Truly, "there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Why Did You Do It?

Jack H. Exum

If we could answer the simple question "Why" we could put 90 percent of psychiatrists out of business. Everyone wants to know "Why did this happen" or "Why did that happen?"

To a child, "Why did you do it?" is a dead loser from the start. Bill Cosby says that they always reply, "I don't know," and he immediately suspects "brain damage".

We may be the ones who are "brain damaged" if we don't find a better approach. Next time an incident (large or small) occurs at your house, try this five point formula for successful learning.

1. Tell me what happened. Begin by hearing their side of the case. "You tell me, I want to hear your side." "If you were involved, you have a right to have a full say." Begin on a high level of trust and a low level of emotions. No frowns, no growls, no shouting, or disgusted looks. Just a simple question to one you love more than life, "Tell me what happened".

2. Do you think this is right or wrong? You're putting the ball back in their court. You heard the case (from both sides) and you're asking for their judgment. Generally, our kids are very honest in matters of self judgment. The key is that they are making the judgment—you are not. If they are guilty and falter, recite the evidence again. Repeat the question, "Do you think this is right or wrong?" If they cannot sincerely make a clear judgment, they need instruction (verbal) so they can make a true decision next time. You'll find that a majority of the time, they will freely admit to guilt involved.

3. What do you think we ought to do about this? Notice the word "we". With this question, you continue to place the responsibility where it belongs. Our children seem to have a natural sense of justice and often they will impose a heavier burden (discipline) on themselves than you might. Let them, and if what they offer is anywhere near adequate, put it into force. If it is out of line (too much or too little), go back to the evidence and rehearse it. At any rate, the true learning process continues. Self discipline is far superior to any other kind. The problem is generally a result of a "lack of self discipline." Allow them to play a vital part in the judicial process.

4. What could you have done in this situation? This is "high honor" because you allow (permit or compel) them to think. Be patient and give them time to reflect. Number the options on the fingers of your hand. Try to get them to name at least three, perhaps four or five. This shows them that while their situation may have been difficult, they could have looked at all their options before proceeding. Help them in this process. Gently lead the witness (especially those that are very young) and when the options have been named, go to the final question.

5. When you face this situation (or one like it) again what decision do you think you'll make? Now you nail the lesson down. This is the clincher. The final curtain that signals "lesson learned". After all, there is but one desire of every parent, "I want my child to learn." If the lesson is learned, what more is there? Even the heavy self imposed judgments may be mercifully commuted or eased by you—the parent.

Now you have made the mental distinction between discipline and punishment. Never punish your children—always discipline them. You punish criminals, but discipline a son. Punishment is designed to hurt, while discipline is designed to teach. Punishment is a form of revenge, but discipline is a means of bringing hope, victory and renewal.

Next time you wonder whether your children are "brain

damaged" try the simple five steps for learning. When we learn better, our kids will do better.

Some Judgment Day Surprises

Roy Beasley

Do you believe in a future and eternal judgment? Do you believe that you will someday "give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead?" Do you believe that the day is coming when the "hidden things of darkness will be brought to light, and the councils of the heart manifest?" Do you believe that the judgment is a part of God's great revelation? Oh, I say unto you, we need to believe it; but multitudes do not; and because they do not, they are going down to a fearful end.

The Bible clearly teaches this great meeting between God and man. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. . ." (Acts 17: 30-31). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 10). "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. . ." (Heb. 9: 27). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20: 12). Many will be surprised to find that the judgment is a reality.

Many will be surprised at the time of the judgment. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." (Mk. 13:32). No man knows; the angels do not know; not even the Son knows; only the Father. It will be in the last day (Jno. 12: 48) at the second coming of Christ.

Many will be surprised at the purpose of the judgment. It is not to be a day of inquiry, not a trial to determine a person's guilt or innocence. God knows that now. We are on trial now in this life and our destiny is sealed at death. The Bible says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already . . ." (Jno. 3:18). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (Jno. 5: 24). Notice the present tense in these two passages. We do not wait until the judgment to be saved or lost, we are saved or lost now. The judgment will be a day of sentence for the wicked and a day of honor and reward for the righteous.

Many will be surprised at the standard used in the day of judgment. The standard will not be human creeds or doctrines of men. It will not be the religion of parents or our own morality. It will not be honesty, sincerity or good feelings. The standard will be the word of God. Our Lord said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jno. 12:48). The dead will be judged "out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20:12).

Many will be surprised at the outcome of the judgment. They will be surprised when they are turned away. They will be surprised that only a few will be saved. But that's what Jesus taught in Matt. 7: 13-14, when he spoke of the broad and narrow roads. They will be surprised to find that hell is a reality and that the sentence pronounced on the judgment will be final and eternal.

Confessing Jesus

Shyam Salam

One time Simon Peter, one of the closest disciples of Jesus made a confession before Him and other disciples that "... you

are the Christ the son of the living God". (Matt 16:16). Upon that confession Jesus promised to build up his Church (vs. 18). On another occasion, an eunuch from Ethiopia heard about Jesus from Philip while he was returning from Jerusalem after the worship. As they were approaching a water, he insisted Philip to get him baptized. Philip enquired if he had believed in Jesus. The eunuch made a good confession before Philip. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". Then, Philip baptized him and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

To confess Jesus before others is the desire of Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father "... so everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge him before my Father who is in heaven but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32,33). Jesus knows the hearts of men. Many believed in Him and walked to hear his teachings, but they walked hiding. Because some were afraid of their friends who opposed Jesus and some were afraid that they might lose certain worldly advantages they ought to get from the non-believers. So Jesus condemned their cunning thoughts. Men in all ages have such ideas. Jesus condemned them always. Today many do not feel to disclose that they are Christians as they may miss certain opportunities. We may not need to disclose ourselves like Pharisees. But in all appropriate times and places we should not fail to confess Jesus.

To confess Jesus as a part of showing our faith in Him is needed for our salvation. "... If you confess with lips that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved" (Rom. 10:9;10). "... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10,11). Any person who believes in Jesus and wishes to receive salvation must be willing and have enough courage to confess before others regardless of what outcome may be anticipated.

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. So we know and believe the love of God has for us. God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:15,16). Is it not wonderful if we confess Jesus before others in all opportunities. Because it helps us walking close with God. If we stop to confess Jesus before others our faith in him is getting dimmer stop by stop and at the end it will vanish away from our hearts. We will be coming in more awful state than we once lived in as the dog returns to his own vomit. We read of the people at the time of Noah who were destroyed by the flood. We read of the people of Sodom and Gomorah whom God killed because of wickedness by burning their cities. We read of the people of Israel whom God killed by the Plague because of their rebellion against the men of God. Bible says those who leave their faith in Jesus would receive worse punishment than those people. (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

A Call To Arms

Jeff Sturgill

Presently a war is being waged around us. A war where there is either total defeat or victory. The war being fought is over your very own soul. You choose the side you are on, there is no middle ground!

If you choose Satan's side you lose completely. If you choose the side of God you are victorious! Satan wants you to lose. God wants you to win. God does not wish that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die in your place, so that you may win. Satan, the enemy, wants to deceive you, and lead you to hell! He hates you as much as God loves you. You have to decide whether you want to win or lose! Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me.”

Satan wants you to believe a lie that you can sit on the side lines and watch. There are no side lines! This is your fight!

We plead with you, “Put on the whole armour of God, that

ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, where-with ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". (Ephesians 6:11-17).

Join the winning side, believe on Jesus Christ and confess his name before men (Romans 10:9-10). Repent of your life without Christ. (Acts 2:38). Let your old nature die with him in baptism, arise and walk in a newness of life. (Romans 6:3-6).

"The churches of Christ salute you." (Romans 16:16) and ask you to act as the First Century Church who, "... searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11).

The Barrel Race

Jeff W. Sturgill

The clock started as a young lass and her quarter horse bolted onto the rodeo floor. Striving with time, the pair circled the first barrel, the second and the third and raced back from whence they came.

The score was announced and a smiling little lady embraced her horse around the neck.

What a score!

Their diligence in training with love and discipline had paid off; the two had won their race.

While the horse was yet a few days old, the girl had loved it and had picked it to run this race. Not because of anything it had done, for indeed the horse could never earn its master's love, he could only return it.

In our soul's race we can have a relationship with God much akin to this. As the girl had loved her horse from the beginning, God has loved and purchased us with his own blood. The blood of the cross. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". (1 John 4:10).

Just as the horse could not earn its master's love, neither can we earn God's love. The entire reason God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, was because we could not purchase our own salvation, for "...there is none righteous, no not one." (Romans 3:10).

Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

God has created us for a great purpose, to walk in righteousness for him. This is a greater purpose than we could ever attain on our own. For he can do fantastic things with our lives; but only if we let him hold the reins and allow him to be Lord of our lives.

It is our hope that you too will "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:7-10).

Don't reject Jesus Christ and his love, for we have God's promise in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him".

Now we implore, "...why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord". (Acts 22:16).

"The Churches of Christ salute you". (Romans 16:16) and invite you to "... search the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11).

Why I Don't Want to Go to Hell

Thomas R. Boley

Before you read this discussion, read Luke 16:19-31. There you see a contrast in material that the rich man had and what Lazarus had. The rich man was "clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day". Lazarus was clothed with boils. The dogs licked his sores. All that Lazarus wanted from the rich man was the crumbs that fell from his table. We are not told that he was given them.

DID NOT WANT ANY TO FOLLOW HIM!

The rich man recognized Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Then he made a request that Abraham send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool his tongue, for he was in torment in the flame. Abraham reminded him of their experiences in the world. Since the rich man could obtain no relief, he wanted Lazarus sent into the world to remind his five brothers not to come where he was. But Abraham reminded him that they had Moses and the prophets. The brothers could hear Moses and the prophets. Here is one reason that I do not want to go where the rich man was. He did not want any one to follow him into torment. This message ought to strike to the heart of every person on earth.

As far as we know, the rich man refused to give Lazarus the crumbs, and now Abraham tells him that Lazarus cannot bring him relief by a small bit of water to cool his tongue. And there is no crossing over the great gulf that is between the two.

FEAR OF FIRE OF TORMENT

My second reason for not wanting to go to hell is that I fear fire. It is so disastrous and painful. And this fire of torment is the kind where "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched". (Mark 9:44). My third reason for not wanting to go to hell is that the fire is unending. The devouring worm, as in our land fills, never dies.

God will not change his way of reconciling man unto him. When he gives the plan, it remains. Today we have Christ and the apostles to tell us how to avoid hell. If I refuse to hear them, I would not hear one from the dead. God now appeals to man by his Son. (Hebrews 1:1,2). He is the only way back to the Father. (John 14:6).

A MOTLEY CROWD

Another reason that I do not want to go to hell is that there is such a motley crowd going to hell. (Isaiah 5:13,14). Any one who has claustrophobia will be disgusted with the heavy traffic on the Broadway. Look at the crowd who will be on this way. In the first place, the devil and his angels will be there. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever". (Revelation 20:10). These were enemies of the church in the first century, and they are yet enemies to the church. In Revelation 22:15 John lists those who persecuted the early church, and they are now, as a "roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8). Here are those people under leadership of Satan, "For without are dogs (a descriptive term of people who would devour the righteous), and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whoever loveth and maketh a lie." These are false teachers who would destroy the church of the Lord and prevent those who might become children of God from doing so! No one who has a degree of knowledge and wisdom will enjoy the association of such people.

THE WIDE GATE AND WAY

Another reason that turns me away from hell is that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." (Matthew 7:13). Verse 15 warns us to "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." John the apostle says that "many deceivers are entered into the world". (2 John 7). There are no exits where the rich man was.

No, there is no purgatory where the sinner can remain for a time until his sins are purged, and then go into heaven. This is a false doctrine. A great reason to avoid hell is that the torment is endless. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:46). The same Greek word is used for everlasting and eternal. Hell has a big entrance; no exit signs any where around.

The rich man's body was lifeless in a decaying condition. (Ecclesiastes 9:10). But he had an immortal soul. It was the soul talking to Abraham. God said to Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". (Genesis 3:19). In the grave there is no knowledge or wisdom as seen in the verse in Ecclesiastes.

But the rich man had a good memory. He knew the exact number of brothers that he had, Abraham said following his request to send Lazarus, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented". (Luke 15:25). Friend, you can escape a like torment by being in Christ where all blessings are. (Ephesians 1:3). Victory is through Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:57).

The Israel of God

Jim E. Waldron

With virtually every pip-squeak out of the Middle East, some prognosticator has to claim modern Israel is a miracle of God.

The truth is the fleshly nation of Israel, Modern Israel, is not God's nation today. Even as it is written. "know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7). And again. "That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God" (Romans 9:8).

The Holy Spirit uses the allegory (word picture story) of Sarah and Hagar to prove that the nation of fleshly Israel is "cast out". (Galatians 4:21-31).

One who knows the Old Testament prophets knows that God did not intend to pass by the nation of Israel anymore. (Amos 9:1-9). His determination for this age was to save the remnant according to his election. (Romans 9:27, 11:5; Isaiah 11:11).

The remnant of Israel is called into God's spiritual kingdom, the church (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9; Matthew 16:18) in every generation constitutes the "all Israel" that is being saved or ever shall be saved!

When the scriptures say, "so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26a) the adverb of manner, "so," means the sum total of all Israelis saved throughout the Messianic or Christian Age will be saved after the manner of (by means of) faith (Romans 11:20-23), that is faith in the Deliverer out of Zion. (Romans 11:26b).

God has no fleshly nation today that he regards over any other fleshly nation and that includes Modern Israel for as noted above, "it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God" (Romans 9:8), "but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:35). That simply means that males, females, blacks, whites, browns, Jews, Gentiles etc. who obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) and are added to the church of Christ are the true Israel of God (Philippians 3:3, Galatians 6:15-16, Romans 2:21-29) and constitute the kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6), that is "the Kingdom of Christ and God" in this present (Messianic) age.