

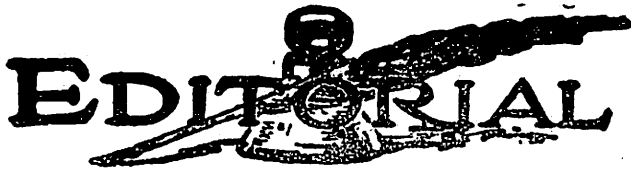
THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 20

January 1990

No. 9



EDITORIAL

The Word Became Flesh

The word "Avtar" means "descent of Deity to earth in incarnate form", or "The Deity appearing on earth in human form." Almost two thousand years ago when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Palestine, He was, in fact, the Deity who had taken upon Himself the human form. He was born on earth as it had been prophesied concerning Him, centuries before His birth. Being the Avtar His birth was not a natural birth but He was born supernaturally, as was foretold hundreds of years before His coming on earth. The prophet Isaiah had said, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (or God with us)." (Isaiah 7:14).

This is substantiated by the record found in Luke chapter two where we read about the angel of God appearing to a virgin named Mary and telling her that she would conceive and bring forth a Son and would call His name Jesus. As Mary heard with astonishment, the angel continued, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you;

January 1990

therefore, also, that Holy One, who is to be born will be called the Son of God.... For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 2:32-37). Jesus was called the Son of God because He was born by the will and the power of God. He was from the beginning with God, and was God, but to save man from sin and its wages He left heaven and came down upon earth. (Genesis 1:26; 11:7). "In the beginning" the Bible says, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1, 14).

Everything about Jesus Christ goes on to prove that He was truly the Avtar who had come to provide man the way of salvation, being Himself the way. (John 14:6). From His birth to His death and resurrection and finally His ascension into heaven, everything shows that He was God who became man. His birth was a miraculous birth. About His life the Bible says, "Who committed to sin." (1 Peter 2:22). The signs He worked before people and His disciples were the proof of His Divinity. He spoke and the diseased were healed instantly. He called and the dead came out of their graves immediately. He would take a handful of food and thousands would eat and yet there were left several baskets full of food. One of the writers of the Bible said, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30, 31). He taught wonderfully and as one having Authority. (Matthew 7:29). Those who heard Him speak said, "No man ever spoke like this." (John 7:46). He would take earthly things, such as flowers, birds and trees etc., and would teach powerful heavenly lessons through them. (Matthew 6:25-34). The Bible says, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." (Matthew 9:35). On an occasion when his disciples were hungry and were looking for something to eat, Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34). Jesus, the Avtar,

had not come, in fact, to do all of those things that He did while He was on earth, although He did whatever He did to prove to the world that He truly was the Son of God. But He had come to the world with a specific purpose to which He alluded in John 10:10 and 11: "I have come" said Jesus, "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." The Deity had appeared on earth in human flesh to give His life a ransom for the world. (Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6). And this was accomplished when He was, by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, delivered up into the hands of His enemies to be put to death on a Roman cross as they had desired. The enemies of Christ thus were actually accomplishing the will and purpose of God by crucifying Christ on the cross. Although He was without sin, yet God made Him, Who knew no sin, to be sin for the world so that we might all become righteous before God by being in Him. (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the Good News of the Avtar Christ, "that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." (2 Corinthians 5:19). "Therefore," The book of God says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17). To be in Christ one must believe in Christ and must be baptized into Christ to receive the forgiveness of sins. (John 3:16; Galatians 3:27; Acts 22:16).

How wonderful then it is to know that we have a God who loves us and cares for us so much that to save us from sin and hell He gave up the glories of heaven and came down on earth in the likeness of men to live with sinful men and to die for the sins of the world, thus to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10). Or as the Apostle Paul said, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9). While God has done His part in the plan of man's salvation, it is the duty of every man and every woman to accept Christ as the Son of God and obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8, 9). "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Christ is the only hope of a lost humanity.

“Let Each One Bring Forth After His Kind”

J.C. Choate

In the beginning, when God was creating all things, he laid down a principle that has never changed or altered in any way from the day it was given. Whether having to do with grass, trees, water life, animals, fowls of the air, or human beings, after its initial creation each one was to be perpetuated by a seed. God simply said, “Let each one bring forth after his kind.” And that is the way it has continued from the beginning. The seed of the tree produced a tree, but never something else. Even a seed of a particular type of tree would bring forth only that kind of tree, and so on with all the other types of creation. Furthermore, even with the passing of time, one form of life has never transformed itself into a different form of life.

Today, though thousands of years have passed since the creation, animals still produce animals, plants produce plants, and human beings give birth to other human beings. In the time of the Pharoahs, human beings, animals, and other types of life were mummified. A monkey then had the same features as a monkey today. The same was true with dogs, crocodiles, birds, and even human beings; that is, the mummified specimens are the same as their present-day counterparts. Even wheat seed that was stored in that period, when planted hundreds and hundreds of years later, still produced wheat.

Spiritually, the seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11). Just as physical seed will produce after its kind, the same is true with spiritual seed. For example, wheat seed will produce only wheat wherever it is planted throughout the whole world. It will not produce corn or cotton. If it was thought that wheat was planted, yet other types of grain or fruit grew up, then according to the law of nature other types of seed were surely planted. Also, the same principle is true when it comes to the spiritual seed. The word of God, the truth, or the teaching of the Lord, when

planted in the hearts of men and women will bring forth Christians and congregations of the Lord's church only. It will not produce followers of men, denominational groups, and people who are believing and practising things contrary to the teaching of the scripture. Furthermore, whatever the seed of God's word produced in the first century, it will produce the same today. Whatever Peter and Paul and others of that time were, religiously and spiritually, as a result of believing in the Lord and obeying his teaching, then we will be the same today when we obey those same truths. Whatever church they were members of, we will also be members of, because we have obeyed the same truths. The seed of God's word would not have made them one thing and us something else.

In John 15, Christ gave the lesson of the vine and the branches. He said that he is the vine and that his followers are the branches. The idea being presented is that the vine represents the church and the branches are the members or Christians. There is one church but many members, according to 1 Corinthians 12. The one vine produces all of the branches, and all of the branches produce the same fruit. All of the branches are connected to the same vine and therefore receive their life from that vine. Furthermore, one seed produced the one vine that produced the branches that produced the one type of fruit.

Now suppose as a Christian one wants to bring forth fruit after his kind, to reproduce himself. How can he do that? If he is a Christian according to the teaching of God's word, and a member of the Lord's family, the church, then he would have to teach a person the same truths he was taught, and he would have to encourage that person to obey the same truths he was taught, and he would have to encourage that person to obey the same commands he obeyed. One could not hear some other teaching, obey other commands, and end up being a true Christian and a member of the Lord's church.

According to the teachings of men, people can hear all kinds of teachings and doctrines, they can be saved in different ways, belong to different churches, and wear all kinds of names, yet still

be true Christians. Actually it is an impossibility. You are what you are taught. You become what you obey. You are either a Christian or something else, but you cannot be both. Let us therefore return to the principle that a seed always produces according to his kind. This is true in the physical world, and it is also true in relation to spiritual matters.

If you are wearing the name of a man or some name other than the name of Christ, if you are a member of some denominational church or some church you cannot read about in the scriptures, please let this be a warning to you that you have obeyed the teachings of men, but you have not obeyed God's will. You can correct the error by repenting of your sins and obeying the teachings of God's word, so that you may be saved and added to the Lord's church. Remember that the seed of God's word will not make you a member of some denominational group because a seed will bring forth after his kind always. There are no exceptions to this divine rule.

Finally, we as Christians must bear fruit. We must be able to reproduce ourselves, and that many times over. How can we be of value to the Lord if we do not do so? Every living thing lives to reproduce. If we do likewise, the Lord's cause will grow and spread. Truly, this is God's desire for his people today, as it has always been.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Shyam Salam

The term, the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of His Beloved Son, was mentioned more than seventy times in the New Testament. This shows that it occupies an important place in all teachings of the New Testament, that means in our salvation.

Beginning with the preaching of John in the wilderness of Judea, he informed people to prepare themselves for the coming

Kingdom, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2). His preaching emphasised that every one need to be in the Kingdom. If they missed it, they would lose everything. Further, when Jesus started his earthly ministry, he emphasised the need to enter into the Kingdom while he was discoursing with a Jewish religious teacher, called Nicodemus, one night, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." (Jn. 3:5) Not only Jesus stressed on the importance of the Kingdom, he also told people to pray for the coming of the Kingdom, (Matt. 6:10) and to seek that first of all. (Matt. 6:33). He gave the description of the Kingdom in his style of teaching with parables so that people could recognise the Kingdom whosoever looked for it. (Matt. 13). Jesus told his disciples that the Kingdom would come with power during the life time of those persons who were standing around him. "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power." (Mk. 9:1).

Jesus also taught how to receive the Kingdom. "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven, whosoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. 18: 3, 4).

This shows that one needs to put away all evil and corrupt things from him before he enters the Kingdom. But if he was in the Kingdom and by his corrupt and sinful acts was put out of the Kingdom. Now if he desires to be in the Kingdom again, he needs to be as he was.

Later, after the death of Jesus, his apostles confirmed to the believers that they were now in the Kingdom. "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13, 14) That Kingdom had already come. "For the Kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." (1 Cor. 4:20). Here, one should not have misunderstanding between the Church that Jesus built and His Kingdom. He used both terms interchangeably. ".....and on this rock I will

build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:18-20). From reading the book of Acts in the second chapter we can read the recorded accounts of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how He gave apostles the power of the preaching the Gospel. About 3000 people believed and obeyed the Gospel by being baptised for the remission of sins. Those who have been saved were added to the Church by the Lord. That means, they had entered into the Kingdom.

Here, the question is, can a person look for salvation outside the Kingdom? Can some one preach Jesus leaving aside his Kingdom? Many consider, the Kingdom is immaterial as long as they believe in Jesus. But how can a man believe and worship the King of the Kingdom of Heaven while he is in another Kingdom? Jesus told his disciples that they could be with him only in his Kingdom. "...I drink it now with you in my Father's Kingdom." (Matt. 26:23). We can have communion with Jesus only in his Kingdom. So we should confirm our stand firm and sure with scriptural support. "Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:10, 11).

Every one who is seeking for Salvation needs to know and believe in Jesus and should identify his Kingdom, that is, the Kingdom for which John asked people to prepare and receive, the Kingdom for which Jesus told to seek and pray and the Kingdom which Jesus prepared for every one of us to live eternally under his Kingship.

Truth From God

Mark Hooper

In the world today, many religions claim to have the truth from God. However, as these teachings are examined, there are

obvious contradictions in what they claim to be truth. Each one proposes its own path to God and claims to be the best way or only way to attain unity with God and salvation from the sins of this world. Every so-called path to God as well as every religion cannot be true. Since there is only one God and Creator of the universe, there must be only one truth about that God.

Much of the confusion about God and religion has come from different men's beliefs and what they feel from inside themselves. However, what one feels to be true inside himself is not necessarily so. In the past, many people felt that the earth was flat. We know that is wrong today because it has been proven that the truth is the earth is round. It is round, therefore, regardless of what men may think. There is an absolute truth that is outside and separate from the feelings of individuals. So what is the absolute truth about God? Can man know the absolute truth about God and what His Will and Purpose are for him? The answer is definitely yes, man can know, since God is good and would not leave man in darkness and confusion about the spiritual truth. His truth has been revealed in absolute terms that man can know and understand. So where is the absolute truth about God found?

As stated above, an examination of the religious books and teachings that claim to be truth from God reveals that these contradict one another. Therefore, all cannot be from God since God is not the author of confusion. Each book should be examined to see if it measures up to Godly standards. Only one passes the tests of time, historical and scientific accuracy, as well as irrefutable miracles that prove it to be from God. This book is the Bible. The Bible proves itself to be the truth from God in many different ways.

Unity of Message

It is a fact that the Bible was written by about 40 different men over a period of 1600 years and not one contradiction can be found in their writings! How is this possible except that God inspired (breathed into) them what to write? Also, there is a common theme throughout all 66 books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation: the salvation of man from sin through Jesus

Christ. The Bible being the truth from God is the only explanation for such a variety of men from kings to fishermen writing at different times but with a unified message.

Prophecy and Fulfillment

Many authors of the Bible prophesied about future events. As God revealed His Word to them, future knowledge was included to prove that what the prophet spoke was actually from God. If a prophecy was fulfilled exactly as the prophet spoke, he must have been inspired of God. Often, biblical prophets spoke about events hundreds of years before they occurred. For example, the prophet Micah lived 750 years before Christ, but wrote that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:9). Isaiah lived about the same time as Micah and prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). How did he know? It is not mere guesswork. That God told them is the only explanation. These and other prophecies prove the Bible to be true.

Scientific Foreknowledge

Another proof that the Bible is the truth from God is its scientific accuracy. For thousands of years; men thought the earth was flat. But Isaiah declares 750 years before Christ that the earth is a circle (Isa. 40:22). One thousand years before Christ, David wrote that there are "paths in the seas" (Psalm 8:8). The sea currents were not actually discovered until Matthew Maury read this verse and set out to find them. Today, ocean vessels follow these "paths" or currents.

Historical Accuracy

For many years scholars thought that the Hittite people mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 15:20). were myth or legend since no records of their existence had ever been found. However, recent excavations of ancient Egyptian and Assyrian records prove that the Hittites were a powerful nation for about seven hundred years! Similarly, Luke records the reign of a Roman proconsul of Achaia named Gallio (Acts 18:12). No records outside the Bible had ever verified this and many thought it was a mistake in the Bible. However, recently a stone inscription was found in Corinth that reads "Gallio: Proconsul of Achaia, A.D.

51-52," when translated. He only reigned one year, but the Bible was proven correct again.

Conclusion

All of this and much more evidence that could be examined prove the Bible is the truth from God. Since that is so, it is the only book that will guide man back to God from sin. This was accomplished through God's only true incarnation, Jesus Christ. Let us all join together and follow only the truth, the Bible, and be pleasing to the One, True, Living God. Isn't this God's will for you that you follow only the truth from God ?

Music in the Church

Gary C. Hampton

From time to time, someone will say, "you are the ones who do not believe in music", when referring to the Lord's church. Of course, they mean that we do not use instrumental music in worshipping God. Their statement lets us know that more teaching is needed on this important subject.

Actually, music is very much a part of worship to God. Singing was a part of the practice of Jesus and his disciples. After Jesus had taught the disciples about the Lord's supper, they sang a hymn and then went to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26). Paul and Silas sang in a Philippian prison cell at midnight. (Acts 16:25).

Singing is also mentioned in Romans 15:9 when Paul quotes from Psalm 18:49. That psalm was written by David when non-Israelite nations were included in his empire and he counted them as belonging to the heritage of the God of Israel. The quote is used by Paul to show Christ's acceptance of Gentiles into the church.

1 Corinthians 14:15 relates specifically to an assembly where spiritual gifts were exercised. To sing with the spirit would be

to sing with a spiritual gift. To sing with the understanding would be to sing so that others could understand.

James 5:13 literally says, "Let him keep on singing." The idea is to celebrate the praises of God in song. No wonder Colossians 3:16 indicates God's grace is the central theme, or heart, of Christian singing. Notice, they were commanded to teach and admonish one another in their singing. Thus, each teaches the other in song, which could only be done if words were used to convey thoughts. Also, there obviously must be more than one present for one to be speaking to another. Further, everyone must be speaking to every other in the songs sung. The next verse tells us all such actions are only to be taken by the Lord's authority. To act without the Lord's authority would be to sin.

Each disciple is directed to sing and accompany his singing by making melody in his heart. (Ephesians 5:19). In this verse, the A.S.V. has, "speaking one to another", which again requires others to be present. The command to praise God in song is written in words indicating God especially desires congregational singing in which all members of the church praise him. Because the New Testament makes no distinction between public and private gatherings in which we worship, we conclude Christians can only praise God in song accompanied by the heart melody mentioned by Paul.

So, there should certainly be music in the church. If it is to be as God directed, it must arise from the thankful hearts of the redeemed and flow forth in song.

Covetousness And Its Cure

Demar Elam

Covetousness, which is an excessive desire for material things, is a rottenness of the bones and a plague of unmeasured proportions. To desire material things for their proper use and employ them for God's purposes and plans are not sinful. It is

only when we develop the strong desire for material things and hoard them for our own selfish gain, thus failing to use them properly, that we become guilty of covetousness. Covetousness is Idolatry. In Colossians 3:5 we read, "Put to Death therefore your members which are upon the Earth: Fornication, uncleanness, Passion, Evil Desire and Covetousness, which is Idolatry." When our money takes first place in our lives, then we become idolaters. Fame, pleasure, wealth or whatever you allow to be first in your life is your god. Covetousness is a deceitful sin because it replaces the true God for a god of things and apparently does this so gradually that the person does not realize what is happening.

Covetousness could be cured by a realization on man's part that he can't take his wealth with him. Just about the time a man hoards up what he thinks will make his life a life of ease (Lk. 12:17-21); he runs out of life. Yes, we usually run out of life before we run out of money. Matthew warns of the folly of laying up treasures here on this earth. He writes "Lay not up for yourselves upon Earth, where Moth and Rust Doth Corrupt, and where thieves break through and Steal: But lay up for yourselves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor rust Doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor Steal." Matt. 6:19-21.

Covetousness will damn our souls eternally. Luke, the physician, gives a cure or remedy for covetousness by telling us that God knows our every need and that the loving, Heavenly Father will provide for each and every need we have if we'll seek the Kingdom of God. (Lk. 12:22-31). Please pause and read these verses before continuing. Matthew worded it like this, "But seek Ye First the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Man has difficulty seeing that the "things" of life that cause him to be covetous and displeasing to God would have been provided by his loving, Heavenly Father if he would have put God *first* to begin with.

Therefore, what is the cure for covetousness? The cure for covetousness is putting God first in our lives. This prevents us

from becoming covetous and assures us of having the "things" in life that are really needful. Christians today just need enough faith to believe that God will provide what He has lovingly promised.

Who Is Jesus ?

Brad T. Bromling

Who is Jesus ? Virtually everything imaginable has been said of his identity. The cumulative force of this has been utter confusion in the world regarding the true nature of Jesus! Whereas his enemies have maliciously accused him of being many unholy things, his "friends" have assumed him to possess other—equally erroneous—identities. When he asked his closest followers to report what the populace was saying of him, they responded: "Some say John the Immerser; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). While some thought He was simply a carpenter, others with anger proposed that he was possessed of a devil (Mark 6:3; John 7:20).

Nor did this confusion dissipate after his triumph over the powers of death. The Docetics of the second century taught that he was all God and no man; the Ebionites taught that he was all man and no God; the Jehovah's Witnesses say Jesus was simply a perfect man; some Mormons accuse him of polygamy; the reincarnationists believe that he was one of them; some believe that he was just one among many good teachers; and the atheists of today allege that Jesus was insane!

But, according to the Bible, who is this Jesus of Nazareth? One text which answers this question authoritatively is Colosaians 1:16-23. In this passage Paul stresses three facets of the scriptural identity of Jesus.

Creator

First, he reminds us that Jesus is the Creator: "...for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things

visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16, 17). That means that not only was he the active agent in creation, but that he is himself God.

The deity of Jesus is loudly proclaimed in the Scriptures. In Genesis 1:26 we are given the first clue of this, for there we are told: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . ." Although God is a Being who certainly defies a complete comprehension by finite minds, he has given us a few glimpses into his character, one of these is that there are three personages involved in the Godhead (Matthew 28:19). It is with this understanding that readers of Scripture must come to John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made." As the Jews correctly perceived, when Jesus called himself the "Son of God", he meant a great deal more than did Luke when he called Adam the "son of God" (Luke 3:38). Jesus meant that he was equal with God (John 5:18), and for this reason they "sought the more to kill him!"

Further, Jesus is not only the originator of the creation, but he is also its maintainer! In the word "consist" (Colossians 1:17) inheres the idea of "hold together." This is the same thought expressed in Hebrews 1:3, where it says that Jesus is "upholding all things by the word of his power. . ." Here is an impressive statement of Jesus' divine power: he simply "spoke" the universe into existence (Psalm 33:9); and by his very "words" the universe continues to operate! Any description that fails to recognize Jesus' deity fails to describe the Jesus of the Bible.

Redeemer

Second, Paul informs us that Jesus is the Redeemer: "in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (verse 14; cf., verses 20-23). The term "redemption" conveys the idea that a ransom price was paid to buy another's freedom from bondage. The very theme of the Bible is the "redemption" of

mankind from the slavery of sin (Romans 3:23; 6:16-23). Without Jesus, there is no redemption! In redeeming man, Jesus fills two offices: (1) He is the sacrificial lamb that was slain as a sin offering. And (2) he is the high priest assigned by God to offer the blood of that sacrifice (John 1:29; Hebrews 4:15). Jesus paid the only acceptable price to secure man's freedom from sin—his pure blood (I Peter 1:18-19). Any description of Jesus that misses his redemptive mission is inadequate.

Ruler

Third, Jesus is the Ruler: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (verse 18; cf., verses 10, 13). This facet of Jesus' character is shown by Paul's use of two figures of speech. First, Paul refers to the church as Christ's Kingdom: "[God] delivered us out of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (verse 13). This figure implies that Jesus is a king, and as such he has complete authority over his subjects (Matthew 28:18; John 12:48). As our monarch, Jesus does not merely preside over a democracy (as an Indian president might). Instead, what he says is law! This is the meaning of Peter's statement, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36).

Second, Paul refers to the church as the body of which Christ is the head (verse 18). A human body which is functioning correctly is in complete submission to the will of its brain. What the head thinks determines the attitude, posture, direction, and well-being of the whole body. Just so, Christ demands the same influence over his church: "and [God] put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Any answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" that contradicts or fails to consider the Lordship of Jesus is unbiblical and useless.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is our Creator. Like clay in a potter's

hands, who are we to do less than yield to his will (Romans 9:21)? Jesus is our Redeemer, and like the two men from Jericho who were freed from the bondage of blindness, we ought to arise and gratefully follow him (Matthew 20:34). Jesus is our King, and as his subjects we must serve him with all reverence and humility.

Yes, the world is confused over the identity of the Nazarene; and this confusion will result in the condemnation of many. If those of us who call ourselves his friends fail to recognize—and teach others—these facets of Jesus' character, we will fare no better in the presence of Jesus who then will be our Judge! (II Timothy 4:1).

The Unity Of The Spirit

W.A. Holley

The unity of God's people has always been the objective of God Almighty. This was true in the Old Testament; and it is still true in the New Testament.

It has always been sinful to sow discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:14, 16-19). Strife, dissension, or contention for superiority has ever been contrary to God's will and way.

There was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham (Genesis 13:7-8). In this, Abraham was the peacemaker. Among brethren there should be no division.

Under the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the kingdom of God continued for 120 years (See I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings). But, there arose division, as a result of which ten tribes of God's people, under the leadership of Jeroboam, established their own kingdom. From that time forward, there was hostility, war, and division which was never healed. In many instances divisions once begun can never be ended! Let us beware!

Religious division is strongly condemned in the New Testament. Jesus, just before he was to be crucified, prayed unto his Father, saying: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and loveth them, even as thou lovest me" (John 17:20-23, A.S.V.).

Our Lord recognized the importance of unity. He said, "...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth" (Luke 11:17, A.S.V.) What Jesus said here is still true! Absolutely true!

The church of Christ was established in A.D. 33 upon the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-42, 47; Colossians 1:13-14). Was the church united then? Indeed it was: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common..." (Acts 2:44; Cf. 4:32-35). Acts 5:12 says, "... And they were all with one accord..."

What we have just read could never be said of denominationalism. Denominationalism is inherently sinful. Why is the foregoing statement true? Simply because denominationalism is built upon division—a church for every man's choice—as if Jesus has no church and no choice! The truth is: Jesus added to his church centuries before denominationalism ever came into existence. In fact, Satan is back of all denominationalism, for he is the god of division. Factually, one can be a New Testament Christian, and never be a member of any (or all!) denominational churches as were those who became members of the church in the first century!!

It is sinful for members of the church to split up into warring groups. We quote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined

together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

But in the church at Corinth there was division over preachers. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Corinthians 1:11-13). Hence, Christians are not to follow preachers, but we must follow Christ.

To follow preachers is to be "carnal" and to "walk as men" (I Corinthians 3:1-6). We honor gospel preachers; but sometimes they go astray, or get lost along the way; (I Timothy 1:19-20; II Timothy 2:16-18; 4:10, 14-17). Follow Jesus Christ who never goes wrong! One should follow a preacher only as he follows the Lord (I Corinthians 11:1).

Dear Christian Friends, be on the look-out for those who make it their business to cause division. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18).

It is the duty of Christians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3-6). This work can be accomplished by practicing lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, ever living up to the high standard of Christian deportment (Ephesians 4:1-3). Without these traits, the unity of the Spirit cannot be achieved.

What are the planks of the unity of the Spirit? There is . . .

One body—the church, Ephesians 1:22-23.

One hope—life eternal in the world to come, Mark 10:30.

One Spirit—the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 12:4.

One Lord—Jesus Christ—I Corinthians 8:6.
One faith—Jude 3; Romans 10:17.
One baptism—Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38.
One God—Galatians 3:26-29.

Please study these facts carefully. There are seven "one's" here. One cannot have the 'church of one's choice' any more than one have the Spirit, or Lord, or God of his choice. One cannot have the faith of one's choice any more than the God of his choice. Dear Reader, believe, and obey the truth today.

Is Attendance That Important ? Isn't What Is In A Man's Heart More Important ?

Bob Prichard

The idea that church attendance is not very important would have seemed very strange to the first century Christians. From the beginning of the church, they met together to worship God. Luke described the early church in Acts 2, saying that the three thousand Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:42, 46, 47).

Paul wrote, "When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (I Corinthians 14:26). Obviously, one of the things that they most often did was to "come together."

But some argue that just "going to church" does not make one a Christian, and "going to church" doesn't have that much

to do with the kind of person one really is. There is no doubt that simply "going to church" does not make one a Christian; and it is also true that the kind of person one really is, is very important. But these arguments are really irrelevant, because God has commanded that they who would be pleasing to him must meet together to worship him. Jesus said "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). If one does not do what Jesus has commanded, he sins. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Failure to worship with the church shows a lack of love for the Lord.

The Hebrews writer said, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). How can a Christian "provoke unto love and good works," or be "provoked unto love and good works?" when he forsakes the assembly? Every member is needed for the worship services.

The absentee misses the opportunity to join with other Christians in singing praises to God, and offering corporate prayer to God. The absentee misses the opportunity to give to God, as he has been prospered. He misses the opportunity to learn from and profit from exhortations from God's word. Can anyone say that he is really better off by not participating in the worship of the church?

The willful absentee sins against the God of heaven, denies himself the blessings of God, and hurts the church, the bride of Christ.

Where Are You Going ?

Dana Watford

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to a group of

January 1990

prisoners at the State Penitentiary. I am happy that I was able to share the gospel of Christ with those men. But a somewhat amusing incident took place as we were leaving the building to go back across the prison yard. We were late getting through with the service (through no fault of my own) and instead of being able to walk across the yard when it was empty, we had to walk when it was full of prisoners going back to their cell blocks. I was out in the front of our group talking to one of the prisoners who had been at the service, when I realized that I went through a gate that I had not remembered coming through when we came in. I was going into the cellblock with the prisoners! I heard someone ask from behind, "Where are you going?" Several of the prisoners invited me to come in with them! Of course, I refused. When someone asked me why I was going that way, the only reply I could come up with was, "That's what happens when you follow the wrong crowd." It was somewhat comical when I said it, but the truth of it was plain to see.

There is perhaps no explanation given more often for our actions than: "Everybody else is doing it." This is given to explain everything—from our choice of clothes, to our willingness to engage in the same sins as those around us. It is our refuge against the pleas of our friends for a life that is more noble and pure. "Everybody's doing it" seems to be the standard of too many today.

It would be wise for us to consider this standard of following the crowd in light of some things which we know from the past. What if we had lived with Adam and Eve in Eden. Everybody present disobeyed God! Would you have followed the crowd on that day? What if you had lived in Noah's time? If someone had asked you, "Where are you going?" Would you have been walking toward the ark with that magnificent minority? or, following the multitude away from it to do evil, and to death?

This attitude of following the crowd is dangerous! It assumes that the standard of right is determined by men. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Men have never been able to agree on an acceptable way of life, much less follow such

a standard (Jeremiah 10:23).

The only way to know what is right is to learn what God has said ! His word alone is the standard (Isaiah 49:22).

Would You Be Elected ?

Gus Nichols

Suppose you as a member of the church had to run for membership in the church each year, and your election depended upon what you had done for the Lord the past "term". Let us further suppose that your re-election depended upon the "record" of your attendance at Bible school and at the preaching and worship services on the first day of the week. What about your contribution ? Would you be glad to make it public ? How about your record of inviting others to church, and hospitality and friendliness and good works ? Would you be re-elected each year ? Peter says, "*Make your calling and election sure*" (II Peter 1:10).

Some Things You Should Know About The Lord's Church

Glenn Colley

Realizing that many who read this magazine aren't members of the Church of Christ, I thought this list might be helpful:

I. You should know that, in the New Testament, the Church is called:

- The temple of God. (I Corinthians 3:16).
- The bride of Christ. (Ephesians 5:21-32).
- The body of Christ. (Colossians 1:24; Ephesians 1:22-23).
- The kingdom of God. (Colossians 1:13).
- The house of God. (Timothy 3:15).

- The Church. (Ephesians 3:10).
- The Church of the first born. (Hebrews 12:23).
- The Church of Christ. (Romans 16:16).

II. You should know that members of the church are called:

- Members. (I Corinthians 12:27).
- Disciples. (Acts 6:1).
- Believers. (Acts 5:14; 2 Corinthians 6:15).
- Saints. (Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7).
- Priests. (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:16).
- Christians. (Acts 11:26; 26:28,29; I Peter 4:16).

III. You should know that:

- Elders, also called bishops, overseers, or pastors, have the responsibility of overseeing and feeding the flock. (Acts 20:28; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4).
- Deacons are selected to serve the church. (Acts 6:1-6; I Timothy 3:8-13).
- Evangelists, or preachers, are to teach and preach God's word. For their work and qualifications see: (Ephesians 4:11; I and II Timothy; and Titus).

IV. You should know that in order to be added to the church you must:

- Believe in Christ. (Acts 2:36; 16:31; Hebrews 11:6).
- Repent of your sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30).
- Confess your faith in Christ. (Matthew 10:23-33; Acts 8:37-38).
- Be baptized. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 Galatians 3:27).

V. You should know that baptism requires:

- Water. (Acts 10:47).
- Much water. (John 3:23).
- Going to the water. (Acts 8:36; Matthew 3:5,6).
- Going into the water. (Acts 8:38).
- Burial. (Romans 6:5).
- A planting. (Romans 6:5).
- A washing. (Acts 22:16).

- A birth. (John 3:5).
- A raising out of water. (Colossians 2:12).
- Coming up out of the water. (Acts 8:39).

VI. You should know that in Baptism:

- Sins are washed away. (Acts 22:16).
- You are saved from sins. (I Peter 3:20-21; Mark 16:16).
- You have remission of sins. (Acts 2:38).
- You are baptized into Christ. (Galatians 3:27).
- You are added to the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- You put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27).
- You walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4).
- You obey Christ. (Acts 10:48; II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

VII. You should know that in the church is:

- Redemption. (Ephesians 1:7).
- Forgiveness. (Ephesians 1:7).
- Sanctification. (Ephesians 5:25).
- All Spiritual blessings. (Ephesians 1:3).

VIII. You should know that Christ himself:

- Loved the church. (Ephesians 5:15)
- Bled for the church. (Acts 20:28).
- Established the church. Matthew 16:18).
- Called the church His. ((Matthew 16:18).
- Added to the church. (Acts 2:47).
- Is Head of the church. (Colossians 1:18).
- Will save the church. (Ephesians 5:23).

“He Stood Condemned”

Gary McDade

The life of the apostle Peter is characterized by impetuosity and radical fluctuation. And, while Christians like to view themselves stalwart disciples like the apostle Paul, most admit that their lives relate more closely to that of Peter. An overall

study of Peter's life offers much to be gained from the standpoint of both instruction and veneration of Peter. However, the space allotted for the discussion of Peter's behaviour at Antioch requires driving the focus is tightly on one single incident where the Bible says, "He stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11).

Background

Peter knew that the gentiles were acceptable candidates for the gospel (Acts 10:28). He was the first to preach the gospel to gentiles (Acts 10:28-48). He himself had convinced others of this truth (Acts 11:4-18). At Antioch, he fellowshipped with the gentiles until Jews from Jerusalem arrived who had been sent by James. Then he dissembled or separated himself from them causing other Jews to do likewise. His motive was fear of the Jerusalem Jews (Gal. 2:12-14). Peter erred in conduct, but not in doctrine because doctrinally he was guided by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13).

This is the phrase in Greek of Paul's inspired judgment of Peter's conduct on this occasion. The KJV renders it, "Because he was to be blamed." The ASV has, "Because he stood condemned." The lexicon of of Arndt and Gingrich follow the ASV translation (p. 410). *The Theological Dictionary Of the New Testament* (abridged) has "detected" or "condemned" (p. 122). The information from the ancient papyri suggests self-condemnation (Moulton and Miligan, p. 325). A point confirmed by I John 3:20, 21 which is the only other occurrence of this word in the New Testament. Peter's sin had the potential of dividing the body of Christ, the church, along racial lines. He needed now to obey the principle he himself had taught Simon in Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

Applications

First, Peter was not the first pope or Vicar of Christ being a substitute for Christ. He was a man capable of errors in conduct albeit the fact of his being inspired made errors in teaching impossible (1 Cor. 2:12,13). Second, if an apostle could do something blameworthy, then every Christian certainly should take

heed (1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Pet. 4:17-18; and 2 Pet. 2:20-21). Third, the plea in public prayer "Forgive us as we sin" should express the desire for God's mercy and forgiveness to continue to cover the penitent as they repent of sin instead of declaring the "once saved-always saved" false doctrine. If upon becoming a Christian one is no longer accountable for his sins, then there is no way Peter could have "stood condemned." Fourth, God's grace does not cover sins without repentance of those specific sins. Even one sin must be repented of (Acts 8:20-24; Gal. 2:11, 21). Fifth and last, repentance may be considered both a state in which a Christian lives (Mt. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:9-10) and an act (Acts 8:24). Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resisted fast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:8,9).

God Desires Our Happiness

Raymond C. Kelcy

Some of the words used by Paul are "joy", "rejoice", and related words. God intended for His people to rejoice and be glad. He tells us in His Word what it takes to make us happy, and surely He knows.

All of God's laws are for our good. God knew that we cannot be happy if we are thieves; He knew that we cannot be happy if we are covetous; He knew that dishonesty detracts from one's peace of mind. So, when God told us not to do these things, it was not that He was trying to keep something good from us in an arbitrary fashion. He was interested in our well-being as well as that of others.

However, some feel like the little boy who said, "This medicine must be good for me; it tastes so bad," They feel that God's way is distasteful and that the things which God has for-

bidden are the things that would make for happiness. This is not true! God has not withheld one good thing from us. He is interested in our happiness for eternity and for time as well. Trust the Lord to do what is right and what is best for us!

If we can only be convinced of the fact that God wants us to be happy and that He knows what it takes to create happiness, then we will be on the road to happiness. God who made man knows man's needs. He never misleads the objects of His loving care. He is faithful and never deceives. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say Rejoice." (Phil. 4:4).

Seed Sowers Or Soil Inspectors?

Don Mitchell

In the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:1-9; Mk. 4:1-9; Lk. 8:4-8) we find that the seed that was cast out by the sower fell on various types of soil. There was the wayside soil, the rocky ground, that which was thorny, and the good, fertile ground. It is interesting to me to note that the sower did not confine his energy just to the good ground. No laborious efforts at testing the soil were put forth. He simply sowed the seed.

God did not make us to be "soil inspectors". He told us to sow the seed. While as good stewards of our time and energy, we cannot be oblivious to the fact that some "ground" is more fertile than other ground, we must not lose sight of the overriding task to be sowers of the seed. Precious time may well be lost in search of the soil which will produce a hundred fold. In so doing we may pass up numerous opportunities to sow the seed, even missing some of that good ground we so diligently search for.

Let's remember then, that our Lord calls us to be sowers of the seed and not soil inspectors. If we sow the seed and water it, God will provide the increase. (ICor. 3:6).