

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### ***What Does The Bible Teach ?***

**"Let this mind be in you which was also  
in Christ Jesus"**

To have the mind of Christ, means to have His attitude, His disposition, His spirit, and thinking as He thought. This is another way of describing a Christian or a follower of Christ, in true sense. And to show the mind, the attitude, the disposition, the spirit of Christ, it further states, "Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8).

First of all, from this we learn, that Christ was in the form of God existing in heaven, before coming down on earth; He was God, before becoming a man. At another place, about Him, it is written in the Bible: "In the beginning 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). Being one in the Godhead, He did not, or He chose Himself not to consider to be equal with God! He was

willing to give up His position; because He knew of no other way by which humans could be saved of sins and made worthy of heaven. So, He made Himself of no reputation, or emptied Himself of His heavenly privileges. He yielded His own will! Like a servant, He was sent.

And, it is noteworthy, that He was sent in the likeness of men. Speaking of mankind, the Bible says, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Speaking of Christ, the Bible says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). While all have sinned by their own choice. But in the case of Christ, who knew no sin, God made Him to be sin for all humanity. "Who committed no sin," says the Bible at 1 Peter 2:22, about Christ, "Nor was guile found in His mouth." He was the only man who lived and walked on earth who had never sinned. Not because He did not have the capacity to sin, He could have if He wanted to. The Bible says, "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15).

Then, we are told that as a man, Christ humbled Himself. David, in his prophetic Psalm 22:6 described Christ in His humility as "a worm." Later, the prophet Isaiah pictured Christ as, "He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are Healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53: 3-6). The Phrase "He humbled Himself," should be viewed in this perspective. The Christ, the God, in heaven, before coming to earth knew, what He would face on earth. He chose to humble Himself in this fashion.

And, not only so, but He became obedient to the point of death! The one who had commanded everything into existence in the beginning (John 1:3 & Colossians 1:16), The Creator and The Master, Himself became obedient to the point of death, that is, He was willing to die, the death of a sinner, as a sinner, taking upon Him sins of the world. John, one of the inspired writers, of the New Testament books, so rightly pointed out, at 1 John 4:10,

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Christ was sent, or He allowed Himself to be sent as the Son, to die and thus to become the propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 2:1, 2). He, willingly, took upon Himself sins of all humanity, even though there was no sin in Him, but God allowed Him to die as a sinner, so that He might become before God the propitiation for our sins.

Too, it is noteworthy that the inspired writer didn't stop by saying, Christ became obedient to the point of death, but he said, "even the death of the cross." There was something so important about the death of the cross that it made Christ's death highly significant. The death of the cross was the most cruel and fierce death under the Romans' rule. It was devised for the hardcore criminals. Men were nailed upon it and hung there unsheltered from the biting cold or the scorching heat until they died of exhaustion or heart-breaking suffering. Even though Christ had not committed any sin or crime, yet the Bible says, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3). According to Romans 5:8, on the cross, God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were all sinners, Christ died for us.

## ***Where Did The Church Have Its Beginning?***

**J.C. CHOATE**

There are many churches in this world and yet the Bible says there is but one church. (Ephesians 4:4). Which one is the true one? There are many marks of identification of that church like the one who built it, when it was built, etc., but one of the ways we may know which church belongs to the Lord is to discover where the church had its beginning.

Old Testament prophecies spoke of the coming of the Lord's kingdom or church. Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the

mountain of the Lord, to the house of God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2,3).

This prophecy had reference to the establishment of the Lord's spiritual kingdom, the church. Notice that it would come to pass in the last days, after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It would be established in the top of the mountains. The Lord's house had reference to his family, the church, and the top of the mountain is identified as Jerusalem. He also says that all nations would flow into it and out of Zion, out of Jerusalem, would go forth the law, the word of the Lord.

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, Christ appeared to the Apostles, "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-48). Before returning to the Father in heaven, he said to the same Apostles, "But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 1 and 2 we see that the Apostles were gathered in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a Jewish feast day, and Jews had gathered there from all over the world. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles and they began to speak in the languages of the people, preaching Christ to them, and as a result some 3,000 believed and were baptized, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:47).

So the church was established in the city of Jerusalem in about A.D. 33 and the gospel went forth from Jerusalem to the rest of the world.

On over into the 600's most of the Lord's church fell away and became known as the Catholic church. Eventually it split into the Roman and Greek Orthodox churches. In the 1500's, as result of Martin Luther's attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant movement came about and resulted in the numerous denominational churches that we are familiar with today.

But what about the one true church, the Lord's church, that

had its beginning in Jerusalem? Even though there was the apostasy of a large number of members of that church, the faithful few continued, and has remained in the world to this day. Not only that, but that same church will continue to stand as long as the world stands, and it will live on for all eternity. (Daniel 2:44; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

But if a church had its beginning in some city other than Jerusalem, it cannot be the Lord's church.

Where did your church begin? My friend, the Bible teaches that the Lord's church, the one church of the Bible, had its beginning in Jerusalem. You are encouraged to become a member of that church.

*Especially for Women*

## ***How Were They Saved?***

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

"Now, back to our study about those people in Act who became Christians," Andrew said as he pulled a chair up to the table.

Rachel put Timothy to bed and brought her study materials to the table. "We had finished chapter 8," she said, opening the Bible and the notebook with the chart they had begun.

"Here's something interesting," Andrew said. "It says that Saul — the one who had been present at the stoning of Stephen — was breathing out threats and murder against 'the disciples of the Lord.' And he got authorization to go to Damascus to search for any who were of 'the Way.' Rachel, let's make two other lists, to help us learn what the Bible teaches about what *churches* should be called and what *people* should be called. We know that many names are used in the world today. Maybe they're all right, but since we've already read that salvation is in the name of Jesus only, and that Philip taught in Samaria about the *name* of Jesus and the kingdom, then I think we should be noticing as we are reading, just which names the Scriptures use. Don't you?"

"Yes," agreed Rachel. "Let me think — first, the church was

usually called *'the kingdom of God'* or the *'kingdom of heaven'* in the time before it was actually begun, Jesus called it *'My church,'* and it has most often been called *'the church'* in what we've been reading."

"We read in some place that the church was called *'the body of Christ'* —"

"That was in Colossians 1:18 and 24," Rachel supplied, turning to *'body'* in the concordance. "Andrew, I am so thankful you bought this concordance! How would we find related verses of Scripture without it? Of course, the center-column references in the Bible help, but they aren't complete. A concordance is an absolute **must** for anyone who's searching for the truth and needs guidance in the Bible. Without this book to help us, we wouldn't have learned nearly so much in this little time."

"Yes, it's a wonderful book," agreed Andrew. "Now, what else have we read of the church being called? — *'the household of God'*, and *'the family of God,'* one place it was called *'congregation'.*"

"And here it's called *'the Way,'*" Rachel said.

"And, so far, people have been called, as here in this verse, *'disciples of the Lord,'* *'believers,'* and *'brethren.'* I wonder," Andrew said with a puzzled look, "when the word *'Christian'* began to be used? And did you notice that none of these *'names'* for the church are really names, like the official titles used today? They're more like descriptions. But since there was only the one church then, I guess *'the church'* or *'the Way'* or *'the family'* would have been enough identification for anyone to have known which body of people was being discussed."

"But, Andrew, was there only the one church then — I don't mean one group of people in one city, but one united body of people wherever they existed in the world — was there really, *only one?*" Rachel asked, surprise in her voice.

"All I know," answered Andrew, "is what we've read so far — only one."

Rachel sat in silence, thinking of the impact of such a truth on the situation in the religious world.

"OK," Andrew said, "we'll begin with the conversion of Saul [*the hearer*] in Acts 9 and 22; Jesus Himself spoke, asking [*what was preached*] why Saul was persecuting Him; [*response: what Saul did*] immediately acknowledged Jesus as *'Lord'* [*belief*]; in Damascus, he was fasting and praying, evidence of

**penitence; Ananias came and told him to be baptized; to [what God did in response] wash away his sins [saved].**

"What a change for a man like that to make!" Rachel said. "That would have taken such a lot of courage, to leave all his family and associates, to become a part of what he had been fighting and to own as his 'family' the very people he had hated! Andrew, do you think we would have had that much courage, if we had been in his place?"

"I don't know, Rachel. But have you realized that we may be facing a similar question for ourselves? We want to obey God, to be saved like those early Christians, and to be a part of that same church that Jesus started — but the churches around us don't sound much like the one we've been reading about. What will we do if we find that we can't join any of the churches our families and friends are members of?"

"Do you mean we might have to be by ourselves?"

"Yes."

"I hadn't thought that far yet, I guess," admitted Rachel. After a short silence, heavy with thought, she said, "But I want to do whatever is *right*."

"Then we're together on that," grinned Andrew. "So let's see who's converted next!"

"This is [*the hearers*] a centurion named **Cornelius**, with his relatives and friends, [*Scripture reference*] in Acts 10; Peter taught [*what was preached*] that **Jesus was the resurrected Son of God**; [*response; what Cornelius and his household did*] they **believed and were baptized** [*what God did in response*] for the remission of sins; verse 43 [*saved*]."

"From the story around Cornelius' conversion, the fact that he was a Gentile — not a Jew — caused some question as to whether he could even become a Christian," Andrew said.

"Had there been only Jews baptized up to this point?" asked Rachel.

"Evidently," answered Andrew, "because from the wording at the end of the chapter, Peter wouldn't have offered to baptize them if the Holy Spirit hadn't been '*poured out on them*' to show that God was accepting them."

"Over here," said Rachel, reading into the next chapter, "Peter is defending to Christians in Jerusalem what he has done, and he says in verse 15 that '*... the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning*.' Would that mean that the way the Holy

Spirit came to the apostles and the way He came to Cornelius would have been the same — but that He hadn't been 'poured out' that same way on all the converts between the two times?"

"That sounds right," Andrew answered, "but we'll have to study more about that. We're getting a long list of subjects to study in the future!" he laughed.

"Back to our quest of converts! Saul — now called Paul — went on a missionary journey and came to place called Philippi where he found *[the hearer]* **Lydia and her household**, *[Scripture reference]* in **Acts 16**. It doesn't say what he taught but it says *[response: what the people did]* she **attended to the things spoken** and they were **baptized**."

"Later Paul and his companion, Silas, were put in prison. Through an earthquake they were freed, but didn't try to escape. The jailer was so surprised (and evidently knew something of what Paul was teaching and why he was in jail), he asked, '*What must I do to be saved?*' They spoke to *[the hearers]* **the jailer and his household**, *[Scripture reference]* in **Acts 16:25**. Paul spoke the '*word of the Lord*' and the jailer *[response: what the people did]* **believed, and washed their stripes** (showing **penitence**) and they were **baptized**." As a result, '*he rejoiced*'."

"Then Paul went to *[the hearers]* **Corinth**, particularly to **Crispus**, ruler of the synagogue, *[Scripture reference]* in **Acts 18:8**. He preached *[what was preached]* that **Jesus is the Christ**; *[response: what Crispus and the Corinthians did]* they **heard, believed** and were **baptized**."

"This is another unique situation in Acts 19," Rachel said. "The people here had already been baptized '*into John's baptism*.' But when Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit, they didn't know anything about that. After Paul explained that John was only pointing the way to Jesus, they were baptized. So, they **believed** what Paul taught them about **Christ**, and they responded with **baptism** — the information we need for our chart!" she laughed, writing as she spoke.

"And, really, this helps me with a question I've been thinking," confided Rachel. "You know I told you I was baptized when I was very young. To be honest, I don't remember a thing about what I understood that I was doing, or why. So, I've been concerned if it would be wrong to be baptized now that I'm an adult and understand what it's all about."

"It would seem from this incident that just going through



something called 'baptism' isn't enough to make it valid before God. Evidently, everything about the baptism must be correct, and correctly understood, or it isn't 'baptism' at all," reasoned Andrew. "It's no problem for me since I was only christened as a baby. But still, my parents must have thought of it as baptism. Parts of it were not like the Bible teaches, so that made it wrong. And even though you were put under the water, instead of having water sprinkled on your head, still, parts of the 'baptism' weren't right, so it didn't qualify as true baptism before God."

"I'm glad this story was included," Rachel said. "It is a good safe-guard against confusion. Just think of the people in the world who *think they've been baptized*; yet in God's sight they weren't! How important it is for all of us to really *know what His word says*, so that *we can know we're right in His eyes!*"

*To be Continued . . .*

## *New Year Greetings*

FRANCIS DAVID

Another year! We are so happy and blessed to enter in this new year, 1999. Just think, how many new years have passed from us. Every year we meet people and greet them by saying: "happy new year." There are many who have lot of celebrations for this time and there are some who send greeting cards to friends and relatives. We do it each year again and again and the life goes on. But how long? We wish people happy new year but do we ever realise what kind of happiness do we really need? This world is trying to seek happiness in wealth and material things. There is a big hustle and bustle among people and everybody is trying to seek happiness in something.

My friend, the time is running out and that is why one of the writers of the Bible says: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the TIME, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16-17). One version of the Bible says, that you must make the most of your time. We are so busy in our day to day affairs that we seldom realize that one of these days we have to leave this world. The Bible tells us through Peter and James that our lives are very short on these earth. Peter says:

we must know that we are here as Pilgrims and sojourners. James says that your life is like vapour. Just see what the Psalmist says about our lives on earth. In his words: "the days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years; Yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:10). When we leave this world our souls will go to God who is the giver of our lives (Eccl. 12:7). Now you are in the new year, let me ask you what is your priority in life? What is important for you? Is it money, or name or fame? Let us see and stand before the mirror of God's word and soon we will discover, where we stand in these matters. (James 1:21 —27).

Once Jesus was talking to the people and we read this account in Mathew chapter 16 and verse 26. Jesus said: "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is there any thing that you can imagine that you can give to God in exchange for your soul. Just Think.

Have you given your life to Jesus. Have you surrendered your life to him. Many are still thinking and are uncertain whether to accept him or not. There might be some who once gave their lives to him but after some time they have left him. The time is running out. The time which has passed and gone will never come back. Are we ready for the life to come? We will be facing the Judgment day because the Bible says: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgment." (Heb. 9:27). One day we will all stand before God almighty and each one of us will give account of himself to God. (Rom. 14:12). Apostle Paul says: "We must all be made manifest before the Judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body; according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Yes, my friend, we will all face the judgement of God one day. Are you ready?

The time is running out and we will soon be ready to face the second coming of Christ. Christ will come back one day, we don't know when because we have not been told about it. But He will surely come. The Scriptures tell us "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of archangel, and with the trump of

God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so we shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:15-17). The day of the Lord will be sudden and it is expected anytime, any day. The Bible says: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Pet. 3:10). The Lord is long suffering toward us and he doesn't want that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9). In this new year we can give our lives to Jesus and make a commitment that once we have decided to follow him, there will be no turning back. Are you ready?

One day we will face the reality of hell or heaven. Hell will be full of all the wicked people. Hell would be a real place. In Mathew chapter 25th we see the scene of Judgment and there we read "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. (25:32)." Then He shall say also unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels". (41 Verse). Those who are obedient and faithful to the Lord to them the Lord would say: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World." (Verse 34). We read in the Bible that Lord will take vengeance of those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." and to you that are afflicted rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (II Thess. 1:7-9). In Revelation Chapter 21 and verse 8 we read: "... But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death". Would you be ready to face the Judgment day?

There is a good news for those who obey the will of God. Those who are faithful to God. God our loving father has

reserved heaven for such people. According to Bible the heaven would be a wonderful place to dwell in. A beautiful picture of heaven is described in the book of Revelation chapter 21. In heaven God will be with his people. He would dwell with them. They shall be his people. He would wipe their tears and death shall be no more there. There shall be no mourning and crying, nor pain any more. While here on this earth we must make preparation. We need to prepare our souls to meet our God. Prophet Amos told the people that they must prepare themselves to meet their God. (Amos 4: 11-13). The kind of preparation that we have made will decide our destiny in eternity.

We are now in the year 1999 and this is the time that we can give our lives to God. Are you in Christ? You can begin a new life in Jesus today. Once you give your life to him, I tell you, you will never regret. Why not believe in Jesus today, Confess him as the Son of God, repent of your sins and be baptised for the remission of your sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 8: 37-38; Acts 16:31; Acts 3:19, 17:30,31; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet, 3:21, Gal. 3:27). If you are already a Christian a member of the Lord's church, then I would urge you to be faithful to him till your death, and He has promised to give you a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10).

## *What Creed Should One Follow?*

**GARY C. HAMPTON**

Anyone who has spent much time with a two year old has heard the question, "Why?" more than he would care to remember. Yet, it forms the basis for many important questions. Particularly so when one begins to consider the matter of what he, or she, believes. Why does any person, or group of people, hold to the various doctrines which comprise their faith? Often, the answer is simply that such is what is taught in the creed of one's church.

### **A Creed is a Statement of Belief**

The word creed comes from the Latin word "credo," which means "I believe." Webster's Dictionary defines it as, "A statement of religious belief; a confession of faith." Obviously, everyone who has a set of religious beliefs has a creed. That

creed may come from the statements of belief of an individual or a council. It may be plainly called a creed, manual, catechism, prayer book, discipline or some other name.

In 1 Peter 4:11, Peter said, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." Peter's exhortation should be heeded by all. Paul added clarity to Peter's point when he said the man, or angel, who preached another gospel should be accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). Human creeds thus become unnecessary and even dangerous. If they add to God's word, they contain more than God said. If they take away from God's word, they are less than God said. Either way, they become another gospel and are dangerous to the soul who supports them. If one argues that his man-made creed contains only what God said and all of what God said, then it is the Bible and should not be considered man-made.

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth of which Jesus spoke is to be found, according to his prayer in John 17, in the word of God. He asked the Father to "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." So, the only truly acceptable creed is the word of God!

### **Today, Jesus Speaks for God**

Jesus is God's spokesman for today (Hebrews 1:1-2). Moses and Elijah appeared on the mount of transfiguration with Christ. Moses would stand for the law, while Elijah is representative of the prophets and Christ would be the testator of the new will. Peter wanted to build three tabernacles, one to honor each man, but God caused a bright cloud to overshadow them and spoke from that cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him" (Matthew 17:1-5). Jesus acted in accord with the Father's will and spoke the words the Father gave him to speak (John 12:44-50). Jesus promised his disciples that, when he ascended, he would send the Holy Ghost to remind them of his words and say the things Jesus would have him to say (John 16:7-14). Thus, it can be said the apostles spoke in accord with God's will and God confirmed it by the miracles they worked (Hebrews 2:3-4).

### **God Gave a Rule to be Taught and Followed**

Included in the promise to the disciples in John 16 was Jesus' statement that the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth (Verse 13). This the Spirit did. Jude wrote to the early

Christians encouraging them to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3 A.S.V.). Peter said God had given them "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Recognizing the importance of following God's rule, Paul urged Timothy to continue in the teachings his mother and grandmother had delivered to him in Childhood. He assured him that the scriptures were the God's own breathed out, or inspired, word. He said the man of God can be perfected by those scriptures in every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Paul told the Philippians to "walk by the same rule" (Philippians 3:16). He told the Galatian brethren that it was this rule that created a new creature (Galatians 6:15-16). So, the rule we are to follow is the law of Christ, which produces that new creature (Ephesians 2:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1-2).

## **Got Milk?**

**DAVID W. HESTER**

Food is a very important requirement for growth in both the physical and spiritual realms. A child cannot grow and develop a strong physical body without sufficient nourishment. Just so, a child of God cannot grow spiritually without sufficient spiritual nourishment. That is why Peter said to Christians, "**Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.**" (1 Pet. 2:2) The word of God is the only God-ordained food for the soul. Jesus said, "**It is written: man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**" (Matt. 4:4) Inasmuch, then, as the word of God is the only food for the soul, a lack of knowledge of the word will keep one from growing. The apostle Paul told the elders at Ephesus, "**And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified.**" (Acts 20:32)

We understand that in many unfortunate countries of the world, as well as in some parts of America, many little bodies are emaciated due to insufficient diet. Who could not look at the bloated stomachs of the children of Ethiopia a few years back without being cut to the heart?

But, how much more universal this picture is spiritually because many of God's children have starved their souls! Many Christians have failed to grow and develop as they should as a result of a failure to feast upon God's Word. **"When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that someone teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."** (Heb. 5:12) Proper diet, then is necessary in the spiritual realm.

Paul, in condemning the divisions of the church at Corinth, said: **"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."** (1 Cor. 3:1-2) There comes a point in one's life where he needs to digest the meat of the word. The Hebrews writer said, **"For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."** (Heb. 5:13-14)

Yes, many of God's children are literally suffering of spiritual malnutrition! Peter said we are to "desire" this food. Do we do that? Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness...." (Matt. 5:6) Do we actually hunger and thirst for a knowledge of God's righteousness?

"But," someone says, "I am just so busy, I don't have time to read and study the Bible." Have you ever heard that said? Have you said it? Allow me to ask a question. Do you have time to eat, and thus feed your body? I'm sure that most people eat about three times a day, or twenty-one times a week. (Frankly, I admit that I rarely ever miss a meal!) Since I make time to spend an hour a day eating, doesn't it stand to reason I should be able to spend a little time reading the Bible, and feeding my soul?

It's not the little infant in Mommy's arms that disturbs the preacher. In fact, his cries are music to his ears! Rather, it is the six foot, 180 baby that bothers the preacher! He needs to grow!

So, the next time a question arises at work about a Bible topic, or a friend wants to study with you tonight, or someone comes to your door and desires to "just talk," ask yourself just one question:

**GOT MILK.**

# *A Church Without Elders*

GLENN COLLEY

Paul wrote to Titus (chapter 1, verse 5), "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

From this verse let us observe the following.

1. This instruction was commanded (or "appointed") by the Apostle to Titus. It was not a matter of indifference. To ordain these elders in the churches was the will of God.

2. Elders were to be ordained (or selected), for each city in which the Lord's church existed. We learn else-where that every church was to have elders. In Acts 14:23 we read, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

It is important that in Acts 14:23 groups were called churches even before they had elders. Hence, it is possible for a group of God's people to meet regularly today and be a church of Christ without the benefit of elders.

3. The churches in Crete which were without elders had something missing which they needed. That, of course, was the elders. God looks at a church which has no elders as a church in which something is wanting. It would not therefore be right for a church to avoid selecting elders simply because they preferred a church without elders. They should always desire and eagerly anticipate the time when elders can be ordained.

It is not too uncommon today for churches to exist which have no elders. There may be a variety of reasons. The most obvious, and only acceptable reason that comes to mind, is that in that church there are no qualified men. Churches which do not ordain elders for this reason are doing right. Churches would sin by presuming to ordain men who did not meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 or Titus 1:6-9. They have no right to ordain unqualified men, and without doubt the wisdom of the qualifications would become more and more apparent as unqualified men set out to do a job for which they aren't suited. How many churches today are suffering as a direct result of ordaining men



who were novices, or not apt to teach, or not given to hospitality, etc.?

There is a practice concerning this matter which needs to be addressed. Suppose a church has no elders nor men who are so qualified. They still have decisions which must be made, business which must be attended to, problems which must be solved. How can they carry out these obvious needs and still please God without elders? They can announce times at which general business meetings will occur. The men of the church can jointly carry out the workings of the church without any particular man or group of men being set apart to hold authority. They may simply agree to let the Bible be their final standard, and judge matters accordingly. This system, used until elders could be ordained, would not violate the scriptures.

Some well-meaning brethren from time to time in churches without elders will handle this differently, and in a way which raises some interesting and perhaps serious questions. Some churches will appoint a "leadership committee" or a "work and finance committee" or a committee which goes by another such name to govern the matters of the church in lieu of elders. Is this a good practice? At best it should be approached with great caution. The moment it takes the place of the eldership, it is wrong, for it would be a governing plan for the church which replaces what the Bible says. It would be in the same category with the unscriptural church government of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Catholics. We must ask a question of the authority for having such a "committee". God wouldn't have told us how the men are to be qualified to lead the church and then accept whatever substitute we hand Him.

We must also ask a question of the authority such a committee would possess. Would they be perceived by the church as the men who "take heed to the flock" as the elders are charged to do? Would they be looked to as elders are looked to in a church which has elders? If so, they have been placed in that role without meeting the mandatory qualifications of the New Testament. Remember that 1 Timothy 3:2 says, "A bishop then must be . . ." and then lists the characteristics. Who would set the qualifications for the men on the "governing committee?" Lingering questions.

Let's do Bible things in Bible ways. Generally speaking, churches which have qualified men should ordain them as elders.

Churches which do not have qualified men should not set men in authority in committee which look like elderships but are not.

## *The Church And The World*

DALTON KEY

Like it or not, for the present, we must live within this world. Paul instructs us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, *in this present world*" (Titus 2:12).

Though we are the people, the children, of God; and though our home, ultimately, is in heaven, we must still, while clothed with flesh, live as "strangers and pilgrims" in this foreign land (1 Peter 2:11). We are not angels, living above and apart from this sphere. Neither are we called of heaven to live as monks or hermits, in recluse from the people and problems surrounding us. This world may not be home, but is our temporary abode and our largest realm to influence.

While we must live in this world physically, we must also determine to live beyond it morally, ethically, and spiritually. Our hope, our home, our treasures, our citizenship, and our crown all concern heaven (1 Peter 1:3,4; Matthew 6:19,20; Philippians 3:20, ASV; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). We have been married to Christ, not to the world (Romans 7:4; Revelation 21:2).

This world is both a challenge and a threat. What a challenge to think of the billions of souls in need of the saving gospel of Christ; souls which we have opportunity to influence and teach. Yet this world is a threat to our very salvation as it attempts to draw us ever closer to it, shaping us into its' sordid, sinful mold.

Both God and Demas are said to have loved the world (John 3:16; 2 Timothy 4:10). God loved and loves the souls of those who live in the world; Demas fell in love with the world's seamier side. God sought to save the world; Demas, to become one with it.

May we be followers, not of Demas, but of God.

# ***Contend For The Faith, No Matter The Price***

**BENNY W. HESTER**

Jude 3 says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needed for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

You see, dear reader, it is our duty to call men back to the Bible. We are to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent. Sometimes it becomes necessary to do as Paul says in 2 Tim. 4:2, ". . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." It is never pleasant to reprove or rebuke a brother in Christ, yet there are times this must be done. This is not only for the benefit of the brother in Christ, but also the Church for which our Lord bled and died. Notice that Paul says that we are to, ". . . be instant in season, out of season. . . ." In other words, preach the truth when it is accepted and when it is rejected. We have no choice in the matter.

Recently, when a known false teacher moved into a city in our state, faithful brethren made known his denominational views. (He had made his views known publicly.) Instead of the congregation thanking these brethren and sending the false teacher packing, they began to attack the faithful brethren. Even some preachers around the state joined in the attack.

Brethren should thank these brave brethren for contending for the faith. I would like to remind them that this is not the first time that faithful men of God have been attacked because of their stand for truth.

In Jeremiah 18, the Lord had instructed Jeremiah to speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His mission was to inform them to change their ways or, suffer the consequences.

When Jeremiah did what the Lord commanded, the people should have thanked him and mended their ways. But, instead, they reacted in much the same way some brethren do today. First of all, they said that Jeremiah was wasting his time. Verse 11, says ". . . we will walk after our devices. . . ." In other words, we don't care what the Lord wants, we are going to do what we

choose to do. Then they chose to attack, Jeremiah. Verse 18 says, "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. . . ." In other words make Jeremiah the "BAD GUY." Verse 18 goes on to say, ". . . Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

A very successful device of the devil is to call evil good, and good evil. See Isaiah 5:20.

I for one want to thank those brethren who have the courage to stand against false teachers. As I grow older, I see very dark clouds on the horizon for the Lord's church. May we stand shoulder to shoulder with brethren to remain true to the Book and contend for the faith.

## *The Church*

**BOBBY KEY**

The church has no creed but Christ. The Bible is all sufficient and the infallible guide from earth to heaven. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my pathway" (Psalm 119:105). It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in the way of righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (II Timothy 3:16, 17). We need no other book. Human creeds foster division. We must go back to the Bible in all that we believe, teach, and practice.

The church has no name but Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We glorify God in this name. We pray in His name, and the disciples were called Christians after His name. All we do in word or deed is done in His name (Colossians 3:17; Acts 11:26). We honor Christ by wearing His name. Human names are always divisive and antagonistic to the spirit of Christ. No name can compare with the name of Christ (Philippians 2:9).

The church has no builder, head, or foundation other than Christ. Christ built His church (Matthew 16:18). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). Christ is the head of the church, which is His

body (Colossians 1:18). He is the foundation of His church (I Corinthians 3:11). He is the saviour of the church (Ephesians 5:23). The church is the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23).

The church respect Christ and follows His teaching in its worship. "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). In order for worship to be acceptable to God, it must be from the heart, sincere, and guided by the word of God, which is truth (John 17:17). To ignore His teaching and follow our own devices, means that our worship is unacceptable. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Any item of worship not directed to God as its object misses the mark. God did not leave His people without a pattern in this important matter.

One cannot love Christ without loving the church. One cannot be in Christ, without being in the church. Christ and the church are inseparable.

## ***Why The Church Of Christ Is Different?***

**CHUCK WEBSTER**

"You're the church that doesn't have music, right?" or maybe, "You're the group that thinks you're the only ones going to heaven!" How many times have you heard these things before? Most people know there's something different about the church of Christ, but they're not exactly sure what the differences really are. The distinctions noted are usually external variations that one might see upon visiting a church service. But we need to understand an important point here: Beneath those externals are some extremely important distinctions, which lie at the very foundation of what makes the church of Christ different from the religious group down the street. We believe. . . .

**... That the Bible is the pattern for all we do religiously.** Most denominations have their manual or discipline, which is a book of their interpretations which they follow. The church of Christ has no such manual. Notice what God's word says about its all-sufficiency: "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). Why would we need something more? "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3; emphasis added). If He's given us everything, do we need another book? In addition, it's possible for us to *understand* what He has revealed. Paul said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). Our Lord stated: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He has given us all we need, and it's something we can understand—the Bible is our creed book.

**... That we should respect the silence of the Bible.** Throughout history, many have taught that is the Bible doesn't explicitly condemn something ("Thou shalt not. . ."), then that practice is allowed.

Many denominations follow this principle today. But think about God's dealings with mankind in the past. Take, for example, Nadab and Abihu, two of God's priest under the law of Moses (Leviticus 10:1-2). God had told the priest what kind of fire to offer Him, but He hadn't specified the kinds of fire that were forbidden. He just told them what to do, and that excluded all else. But perhaps Nadab and Abihu thought that God didn't condemn practices which He didn't explicitly forbid. Whatever the reason, they offered fire which God "commanded them not," and fire from God devoured them. What do we learn from this, as well as other Bible examples [see also Noah (Genesis 6-9)]? We learn that God expects us to do what He says the way He said to do it. This is the reason you don't find pianos and organs in our buildings (see Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; God has told us to sing). It's why we don't serve hamburger and sodas for the Lord's Supper. It's why we don't dance, juggle, or jump up and down in worship to God. God has specified how He wants to be worshiped, and that excludes any of man's innovations.

**... That we must obey God in order to be saved.** Call any denomination in town and ask them the question, "What must I do to be saved?", and the answer will be something like this: "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as your personal Savior, inviting Him into your heart." We believe that goes against a very fundamental principle taught throughout the

**Bible: God has always demanded man's obedience in order to receive His blessings.** Don't confuse obeying God with earning one's salvation. Not one single person who has ever lived has ever done enough good things to earn his or her salvation. But that doesn't negate the fact that God expects obedience. God gave the Israelites the city of Jericho, but He expected them to follow His orders in order to receive the city (Joshua 6). Faith in God and His ability to give them the city wasn't enough. That faith had to produce action. And the very same thing is true today with God's gift of salvation (Romans 6:23). "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . . ." (Acts 2:37-38). "But wilt thou know...that faith without works is dead?. . . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:20,24,26). Faith that won't act is worthless. We believe faith is foundational because without it we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). But we believe that faith only, a doctrine that many denominations subscribe to, is non-biblical.

Other differences exist, but they are mostly out-growths of the above fundamental distinctions in how we view the Bible versus how most people in the denominational people interpret the Bible. If you're not a member of the church of Christ, we invite you to consider the thoughts above. If you have a question, please ask the preacher or one of the elders, and we'll be glad to help you find what the Bible says. There are many questions in life to which the answers are inconsequential, but the answers to religious questions will determine our eternal destiny. Be sure to let the Bible, and not any person, answer them. May God bless you in your search for truth.

## ***Do You Have A Price?***

**JIM GILLASPIE**

**"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your**

body; and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20). Paul was talking about the price that Jesus paid on the cross, but this past week I read about some others who had been bought with a price.

Tuesday's newspaper carried an article about a denominational church in Maryland that offered a ten dollar bill to anyone who would come and sit through their seventy-five minute church service. The service included a short skit and singing that was backed by a light-rock band. The article went on to say that their attendance that day was 125 more than usual. At first reading, I could hardly believe it. Someone has said that we live in a time when people are turned into radio WIFM ("What's In It For Me"), and perhaps this is just another indication of that type of attitude. But then the more I thought about it, the more I began to wonder. . . . (1) What if they had offered \$100 instead of \$10? How many would have shown up for "worship" then? (2) What if members of the church were offered a certain amount of money for every worship service they attended? Would our attendance improve? (3) What if every time we missed worship, we missed out on a fifty or hundred dollar bill? Would the times we miss for sickness, company, or fatigue diminish? Would we still be "providentially hindered" as often?

Christianity began as a result of sacrifice (John 15:13). The Son of God willingly gave His life to pay the awful price for sin. Peter said "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Peter 2:24). Paul said "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." When Jesus spoke to those who would follow Him, he said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

The Christian life is a life of sacrifice and service. Our worship is an outward pouring of praise and appreciation for a God who loved us enough to take our place on the tree. If we find that we are more motivated to worship by what we can receive, then the emphasis is in the wrong place! The next time you miss a worship service, ask yourself if you could have been present if a \$ 100 bill had been offered for your attendance. If the answer is yes, then it's time to take another look at Calvary!

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