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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach ?

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away."

In conversation with his disciples, Christ had just finished his discourse about the forthcoming destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem of the Jews, including the Temple buildings, which actually did take place in 70 A.D., and he concluded by saying, at Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." From this we learn two important things, namely, heaven or the sky above us and the earth on which we live will one day pass away; and secondly, whatever Christ has taught directly or through his apostles, after his departure from the earth, will stand forever or will by no means pass away.

There were and there are those who have been saying: "Where is the promise of his coming?" Christians in every age or generation have expected the return of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that he will come again to judge the world. (Acts 17:30,31). Christ himself had promised his followers: "I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:3). There are numerous passages in the new Testament of the Bible which exhort Christians to be prepared to meet the Lord as he is coming. (1 Corinthians 15; 1

Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-4). Once when his disciples wanted to know from Christ as to when would he come back? He told them: "Of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only." He also told them: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:36 and 44). The Bible definitely teaches that when Christ will come back in that very day the heaven and the earth will pass away. We read, at 2 Peter 3:10. "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." Some have thought that Christ is coming back to reign on earth. This is not true, because at his coming earth and all that is on it will be burned up. According to 1 Thess. 4:17, the righteous, at his coming, will be lifted up to meet him up in the air.

Surely, heaven and earth will pass away when he will appear, but his words will by no means pass away. At John 12:48 Christ taught, "He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." His words will judge people in the sense whether they have done those things or have obeyed those commands which he had taught and have been written in the Bible. Whatever Christ has taught, he did that when he was on earth and before his ascension into heaven. The second part of the Bible, which consists of twentyseven books, is called The New Testament of our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ. In the first four books, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we read of the things Christ did and taught while he was on earth. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which is the fifth book in the New Testament, we read about the promise of Christ which he had made with the apostles and its fulfilment, that is, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit shortly after His ascension into heaven, and when that would happen they would receive power. (Acts 1:1-8). In the next chapter of this book, we read how they did receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and consequently the power to speak and do things which would be instrumental in establishing and extending God's kingdom on earth. Christ had promised to them: "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they

see the kingdom of God present with power." (Mark 9:1). In Acts chapter two we read how when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit they had received power; and when the power came, God's kingdom, which is His church, was established. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13). With the baptism of the Holy Spirit not only were the apostles equipped to speak and do such things which accomplished God's will on earth, but the Holy Spirit also inspired them to write in the New Testament books the things which Christ had taught them while he was with them and whatever further he wanted to teach his followers to learn and do more. Christ had told his apostles, while he was with them, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you." (John 14:25,26). Again he had told them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12,13). Thus, by the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit of God they wrote twentyone letters to Christians, namely, from Romans to Jude. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). These letters or epistles comprise the doctrine of Christ for his Church, These are his will and his word, and we are commanded not to transgress them or not to go beyond them, but abide in them. (2 John 9-11).

In the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the New Testament and the Bible, and which was written to the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor to provide them consolation and hope and to tell them what would shortly befall their persecutors, at the end of the book is depicted a scene of the judgment day, and it says: "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened, and another book was opened which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the book . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:12 and 15). God's book is the Book of Life, which contains the words of life. His word, which will judge us all in that last day, has been revealed, has been given to us; we can hear it, read it, follow it and live by it,

and finally be saved in heaven. Christ, at Luke 6:47, 48, said one who hears his words and does them is like the man who had built his house on the rock.

Does God's Grace Cover All?

J.C. CHOATE

We know that God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die on the cross that man might be saved from his sins. (John 3:16). What love! What mercy! And yet that love and mercy has to be accepted and applied for it to bring salvation. This is not done on a massive scale but one by one through obedience to the Lord and the Lord adding the saved to his church, one by one.

The so-called Christian world, which incooperates the Catholic and denominational churches, thinks of the grace of God as covering all believers in Christ. Even some members of the church accept this point of view. They reason that members of the church will be saved by the grace of God in spite of their imperfections and weaknesses. Then they look at the other churches in the world and conclude that if God would save them by his grace, in spite of their weaknesses, then surely he would do the same for them.

What is overlooked is the fact that the grace of God does not cover the unbeliever or those who believe but refuse to obey God to be saved and to be members of the Lord's church.

It is true that if the Christian is to be saved, it will take the grace of God to take him to heaven. This is in spite of one's obedience to have remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and one's faithfulness even unto death to receive the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10). That means that one cannot be saved by his own goodness, by doing good works, or even by obeying the commands of God apart from God's grace. The simple fact is that one could never do enough on his own to be saved, but neither can one be saved even by God's grace if he refuses or fails to obey the gospel and to live the faithful Christian life.

Paul said to the Christians at Ephesus, "For by grace are ye

saved through faith . . ." (Ephesians 2:8). That means that God has made salvation possible and man must accept that salvation. Paul wrote Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5). This has reference to baptism, washing away one's sins, entering Christ and his church, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 6:3,4; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:26,27; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38). The grace and mercy under consideration cannot cover those who refuse to comply with these conditions.

What we must understand here is that this grace does not cover all those people who only believe in Christ, because they have not obeyed the gospel (Mark 16:15,16), and therefore they are not saved, and they are not children of God and members of the Lord's church. (Galatians 3:26, 27; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:47). Of course it may be said that we are judging, but we are not judging. Rather, we are merely pointing out what the Bible teaches. When one obeys the Lord, the Lord saves him, but when one fails to obey him, then he is still in his sins and in that case even the grace of God cannot save him. It is just that simple. Finally, it will not be up to man to judge but we will all be judged in the end by the Lord's will. (John 12:48). That means that if one has complied with God's will then he is covered by the grace of God but if he has not obeyed his will, then he is not covered by his grace, and therefore, cannot and will not be saved. Again, it is just that simple.

The Apostle Paul said, "And to you who are troubled 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." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter asked, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

We conclude therefore that only the saved, members of the Lord's church and those who remain faithful to the Lord unto death, are under the grace of God and will be eternally saved by that grace. All others will be lost in spite of the grace of God because they have not complied with God's will to enable God to save them by his grace.

Especially for Women

Search For Truth

The Search Begins

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Andrew opened his package from the bookstore. Rachel reached eagerly for the Bible he had brought for her. Thinking back to her childhood and the Bible stories her mother had told her, Rachel felt a strong pang of regret that she had neglected spiritual things since growing up.

"The shop keeper sold me this, too," Andrew said as he pulled another book from the bag. "It's a concordance, and I think it will help us in finding verses that talk about the same subject. See . . . you look up a word, like love or faith or church, and listed under it are all the verses that include that word."

"Oh, yes," Rachel agreed with excitement. "Since we don't know much about the Bible, this will help us connect the verses to each other. Now, what should we look up first?"

"I think, after dinner, we should divide our study time into two parts. We need to read the Scriptures themselves, beginning with Matthew, since our concern is to know what Jesus wants us to do. Then I think we should spend some time with the concordance, looking up words and writing down the major points we learn from the verses containing the word," Andrew suggested.

"That's a good plan. I've almost finished dinner. I'll hurry. Timothy is awake. Do you want to hold him?"

After dinner, Rachel and Andrew sat at the table with Bible, concordance, notebooks, and pens. Before beginning to read, Andrew prayed, asked God to help them to learn the truth and to understand how He would have them to train their baby. They decided to read silently and independently, exchanging thoughts or questions.

"Since we do believe that Jesus is God's Son, do you think

we should concentrate on things that are written about churches and how to be saved, so we will be able to learn what we need to do?" asked Rachel.

"That sounds good," Andrew agreed.

Within a few minutes Rachel interrupted her reading. "Here in Matthew 3 it says that John the Baptist came, saying that the kingdom of heaven was near. What is the kingdom of heaven?"

"Let's write that question, and see what answers we find. Look—here in Matthew 4:17 it says that Jesus began to preach, '*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*'"

"The kingdom must be important, if it was the subject of Jesus' preaching too," Rachel observed. "Here in verse 23 it says Jesus was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. And all through the sermon he preached on the mountain. He was talking about how things would be in the kingdom! I think I'll mark the verses where something is said about the kingdom, since it was such an important part of Jesus' message to people."

"This is a wonderful promise," Andrew read: "After saying that we shouldn't worry about what we will eat or what we will wear, Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, '*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*'"

"I'll mark that," Rachel said as she carefully underlined with her pen. "We want to remember where to find directions like that, as we're shaping our lives." After a silence she asked, "What does this mean, here in Matthew 7:13 and 14, Andrew? "*Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*"

"It sounds like Jesus' way is either not easy to find or not easy to live, and that most people will go on the road to destruction."

"And look; the next verse says, '*Beware of false prophets, who came to you in sheep's clothing . . .*' Would there really be people—religious people—who would lead us in the wrong way?"

"I'm sure Jesus wouldn't have given that warning if it wasn't true. Look at verse 21: '*Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven (there's the kingdom again!), but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many*

will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" "

"How could it be that people who are doing all those things in Jesus' name would be wrong, and that He would say he doesn't even know them?" asked Rachel, puzzled.

"He tells why: even though they were claiming to be working in Jesus' name, Jesus said *they were not doing the will of God, and they were practicing lawlessness*. That must mean they weren't following exactly what he teaches in the Bible."

"I've heard people say that all these little doctrines in religion don't matter, as long as a person is honest and sincere," Rachel said. "Are they wrong? Do all the things matter?"

"Well, to be honest," Andrew responded thoughtfully, "it would seem to me that if something is important enough for God to put it in the Bible, it's too important for humans to think they can ignore it. Who are we to decide what's important and what isn't?"

"I believe you're right, Andrew. I'm so glad we're really studying, trying to understand what God wants us to do."

To be Continued . . .

You Got To Move

FRANCIS DAVID

When Jesus was here on this earth he was preaching and teaching about his kingdom. He was trying his best to make them understand that what would be his kingdom like. He wanted to teach them the right concept of the kingdom of God. Even today many people have the wrong concept of his kingdom, some even think that He would come again to establish his kingdom on this earth. He is going to reign over here for one thousand years. Nowhere in the Bible we read that Christ is going to come on this earth to establish his kingdom and reign here for one thousand years. This is false teaching. (Please read 2 Peter 3:9-11). We read in the Bible that "From that time Jesus

began to preach and say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17). In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said to Peter "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18). According to the promise he made, he built his church. We read in the book of Acts that church which Jesus promised was built on the day of Pentecost. Peter and other apostles were gathered in Jerusalem and as Peter was preaching to them they asked him and rest of the apostles: "What shall we do?" Peter told them "Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). We read in 41 verse then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and about three thousand souls were added unto them. This was the beginning of the kingdom of God, the church. Those who obey the gospel of Jesus today are baptised and are added to the same body the church. (Acts 2:47). Christ himself is the HEAD of this church. This church is non-denominational. There is only ONE body and this body is called as the church." (Eph. 1:22-23, 1 Cor. 12:13).

Throughout the world the congregations of churches of Christ can be seen. These congregations are autonomous. Their head quarter is in heaven. The question is, are you a member of this church? The part of the body of Christ? I know some of my friends those who are reading this article are members of the various denominations about which we do not read in the Scriptures. The Bible is silent about these denominations. Can you find the name Catholic, Methodist, Lutherans, Baptist, Presbyterians and Pentecostals in your Bible? Please read your Bible carefully and sincerely and you will see that all these names are foreign to the word of God.

Paul says in Romans 16:16; "Churches of Christ salute you." To the church at Corinth he says: "You are the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). Where are you now? If you are not the part of this church then you must think about it seriously and then make a move. Unless you move you can't be a part of Christ's body. You got to move because you cannot be both. You cannot be a member of the body of Christ and at the same time a part of the denomination. You got to move from your past sinful life and come to Jesus. Be a Christian only and not a Catholic or

Methodist Christian. If you want the citizenship of Christ's kingdom then you have to move. You can't have two citizenships. You have to choose one. Paul says in Colosians 1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Obviously we see the kingdom was in existence at that time. Our Lord Jesus is the King of his kingdom and he is reigning from heaven over his kingdom, the church.

My dear friend, dear reader, are you a part of this kingdom? You can enter this kingdom. You don't have to fill up a form or take somebody's permission. You can enter this kingdom by being born again. In 1 John 3:5 Jesus said these words: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". The church of Christ is pleading to all the denominations to come back to the Bible and do the things which Lord expects from us. This church is not a part of any religious denomination. This is the church which was established in Jerusalem, in AD 33. Please decide today that you will make a move and cast aside all denominational creeds and human doctrines and unite together on the basis of the Bible.

Lost Church Members

W.A. HOLLEY

Most elders and preachers among churches of Christ know, personally, those members of the church who have been lost to the church. Their names can be called effortlessly.

Think of the "lost sheep" as mentioned by the Master (Matthew 10:6, 15:24). Branches that bear no fruit are cut off and burned (John 15:1-6). Any church who does not keep his/her body in subjection is certain to become a reject (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Even churches of Christ can go so far from God's will and way, they cease to be churches of Christ. if you do not think so, read Revelation the 2nd and 3rd chapters. Describing the church at Laodicea the writer uses five adjectives to disclose to true nature of its spiritual condition: wretched, miserable, poor, blind,

and naked.

Salt is recognized as an agent of preservation. For centuries man has used salt. Christians (the churches of Christ) are represented as salt of the earth. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). This verse teaches that the church of Christ is to keep the world from putrefaction and corruption. The antediluvian world and Sodom were destroyed because there was not enough "salt" to save them. Christians, you should be aware that you can lose those qualities which make you salt.

Do you know that one can honour God with his lips, but be a hypocrite? (Isaiah 29:13; Ezekiel 33:31; Matthew 15:7-9). A reprobate in Scripture is one who cannot "stand the test." (Romans 1:28; II Corinthians 13:5,6,7). In Paul's day some members of the church had become "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18). Those who work to change the Lord's church can properly be described as "enemies of the cross".

In the light of what we have said, we wish to pose some pertinent question:

(1) Do you make excuses for your absence at worship? We suggest that you read Luke 14:16-24. Remember, excuses are not reasons. Excuses are pretexts; an alibi, and whitewashing. We must not allow ourselves to be hindered by love of possessions, the affairs of business, or by social affairs. The kingdom of God comes first (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom of God is our real goal—other achievements will pale into insignificance at the Great Judgment.

(2) Are you one among those who have simply cut attending the assembly? (Hebrews 10:24-25). God expects man to know and do right; the greater one's opportunity to know the truth, the greater his sin (Luke 12:47-48), if he dies in rebellion against God.

Daniel Webster, asked what was the greatest thought that had passed through his mind, answered, "My accountability to God. "You have a destiny to meet, a job to be done, a soul to be saved, victory to be won. Do not except anyone else to do your fighting or praying or suffering for you. None of us is responsible for all the things that happen to us, but we are responsible for

the way we behave when they do happen. Man's whole duty to God is to fear Him and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Under the New Testament the lord Jesus Christ tells us clearly what we must do to be saved. Read Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47, if you truly wish to know.

(3) Have you become somewhat peeved because the elders or the preacher or some other member of the church have not done exactly as you would want done? Could it be that you are looking for a church which you will never find? A perfect church does not exist. For example the church in corinth had many greivous problems, but it was still the church (Acts 18:8; I Corinthians 1:1-2).

(4) Are you present in your body but absent in the spirit? "For verily I, as absent in body, but present in spirit..." (I Corinthians 5:3; Colossians 2:5). One could be in the assembly while his mind is focused on the north pole. Hear Isaiah, "Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even marvellous work and wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isaiah 29:13-14). Thus hypocritical worship is strongly condemned! Jesus quoted the foregoing Scripture in Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-9). A warning: It is very difficult for some to learn to make a distinction between serving God as He wished to be served an serving Him as we wish to serve Him. Learn to be yourself, pretend no greatness, be willing to pass for what you are, dare to be right, though you have to stick out like a sore thumb to do it. When you come to the end of the rope, tie a knot in it and hang on (Revelation 2:10).

(5) Are you the kind of a church-member who wants to see the church of our Lord modernized by the addition of pianos, organs, reverends and the like? Hence, the church would become just another denominational church. Thus, we would surrender all claims to being the Apostolic Church about which we read in the New Testament? (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:36-47; Romans 16:16). We have some preachers now who assert that the church of Christ is but another denomination!! They are

dreadfully wrong; we will not surrender an inch of Scriptural ground! In many places the doctrines and commandments of men are becoming very popular!

(6) Are you a church-member who through negligence fallen away from Christ and the church? One church member said, "I, little by little became unconcerned and indifferent and disinterested in attending the services until I just quit." Negligence is one of man's greatest sins (Hebrews 2:1-4). The Apostle Peter said, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from holy commandments delivered into them" (II Peter 2:20-22, ASV).

A few words of encouragement are in order: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love" (I Corinthians 16:13-14).

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving from the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). Dear Christian friends, let your life be filled with both zeal and enthusiasm for the will and the way of the Lord.

Leave The Judging To God

M. FLOYD BAILEY

Have you ever heard someone say, "Leave the judging to God"? On the face of it, one might think this is always a valid statement. Whereas there are certain times or contexts in which this statement might be correct, it is not always a matter of waiting or God's judgment. Some times we must simply accept what judgment God has already given. Unfortunately, this statement is abused all too often.

Many times this phrase is used when someone is uncomfortable with the realization of what God has already

judged, it would be analogous to my saying to my son who asks me, "Dad, can I buy some candy?," "No, Son, you cannot have any candy today." Dad, could I make some candy?" he queries again. "No, Son, you cannot have any candy today" is my judgment. "Dad, could the neighbour give me some candy?" "No, Son! You cannot have any candy today." It is in this manner that many question God's revealed judgments, looking for loopholes as they do with their taxes. How foolish it is for us to refuse to accept the judgments that are already made and pretend that because we have ignored them, God is somehow going to change His decisions. God does not change (Malachi 3:6).

I. The Law of judgment are already settled in heaven, and we can know and apply them. God's judgment is not going to be based on some surprise standard. The Bible is very clear how our eternal judgment will be determined. Jesus said, *"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). Paul revealed, *"He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained"* (Acts 17:31). Paul also wrote, *"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"* (Romans 2:16). James said, *"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty"* (James 2:12).

John records the words of our Lord Who said, *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). If we can know God's will on any given matter than we can, by the same token, know God's reaction to our sin and the destination of those who *"know not God and obey not the gospel"* (II Thessalonians 1:8).

II. Where does grace fit in? Some have a problem with fitting grace into judgment. We know that God has a part of His nature grace, love, mercy. Many questions how God can have these attributes in light of eternal damnation, specifically. Unfortunately, the modern concept of grace often fails to realize the necessity of obedience. Paul made it very clear to Titus: *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:12).

In no biblical account can one find the grace of God being

bestowed upon the disobedient. If God had ever given grace to the ignorant, Acts 17:30, 31 declare that it is now not to be. If there is grace outside of Christ, then it would follow that there is salvation outside of Christ. If there is salvation outside of Christ, then Christ died in vain. Those who are faithful to God's Word know that there is no salvation apart from Christ (I Thessalonians 5:9; II Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 5:9).

III. God judges both positively and negatively. Matthew 7:21-23 contains both negative and positive, guilty and innocent judgments. Jesus said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven . . . And I will profess unto them, I never knew you."* "There are many who are doing wonderful works, but they are not doing the will of the Father; thus, the condemnation is passed. Notice that Jesus didn't say he might say, "Depart", but rather He "will profess depart".

Some will say that this is true with regard to a class of people, those who "do not the will of the Father", but that we should never apply it to individuals. In other words, some argue that we can never make a determination about anyone's eternal destination. This is simply not the case, for if I cannot tell what God is going to do with regard to someone else's soul based on clear evidences of life and doctrine, then I cannot tell what God will do with my own soul.

Stephen knew that those who were stoning him to death were sinning by their deeds, and he also knew they would pay for their sins; thus, he pleaded on his attackers' behalf (Acts 7:60). Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan (II Timothy 1:20); he also said that the Lord would repay Alexander the coppersmith for his evil work (II Timothy 4:14). Previously Paul and Barnabas judged that the Jews had rejected the word of God and said, *"[ye] judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life"* (Acts 13:44-46). These cases and many others demonstrate that one can know and apply that knowledge about the eternal destiny of those from whom such evidence has been manifest.

On the other hand, I can also know of one's eternal destination as a faithful Christian. Paul assumed that those in Thessalonica knew who was asleep in Jesus and could be comforted by the thoughts he penned in his first letter (4:13-18). John wrote, *"Now by this we know that we know him, if we keep*

his commandments" (I John 2:3). Truly, *"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest"* (I John 3:10).

IV. Ignorance is bliss . . . until . . . Oh, yeah, ignorance is bliss alright—until I find out what I missed by being ignorant, or until I find out what was hurting me in my ignorance. Some, however, make ignorance bliss for all eternity, at least as far as God is concerned. If the ignorant are going to fare just fine on the day of judgment, why in the world would I want to teach them the truth of the gospel and make them amendable?! Paul said to the Corinthian brethren that because he knew the terror of the Lord, he persuaded men (II Corinthians 5:11). I believe that Paul knew something about their destiny that they were ignorant about, so he went and warned them. Ezekiel's watchman was held accountable if he failed to give the warning to those who lived in his city in ignorance. However, the destruction would come upon all, regardless of their ignorance (Ezekiel 33). One fact that we must remember: It is not God's fault if someone lives his entire life in ignorance. He has done His part. We must do ours (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Is Jesus Coming Soon?

GUY F. HESTER

Since New Testament times, there has been much speculation about the time of the second coming of Christ. Many are saying that his coming is very near, or that "he is coming soon." This is one of the favourite themes of the false teachers on radio and television. According to them everything that happens, whether it be an earthquake, trouble among nations, a presidential election or a federal building that is bombed in Oklahoma City, is a sign that the coming of the Lord is going to be soon.

Even in our song books we have a song, "JESUS IS COMING SOON," written by Mr. R.E. Winsett, a pentecostal, based upon a false view of Matthew chapter 24. The words of the song teach that since *"Troublesome times are here . . . Love of many cold, losing their home of gold, This in God's Word is told. . . When these signs come to pass, nearing the end at last,*

It will come very fast . . . Jesus is coming soon." Since we are to teach and admonish one another in our singing (Col. 3:16), it is just as wrong to sing a false doctrine as it is to teach a false doctrine from the pulpit or in the class room.

Now we have no argument with any one over the fact of the second coming of Christ. I certainly believe and teach this. When we take the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, it is not only to remind us of his suffering but also a looking forward to his return (I Cor. 11). If we had no hope of his second coming, we would not be Christians at all (Jn. 14:1-3; Heb. 9:28; Acts. 1:9-11; I Thess. 4:16-18; Mt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:5-10).

The point that we wish to make is that the time of the Lord's return has not been revealed. We *do* know that it is getting nearer all the *time*; it is just as certain as death. But we do not know when he is coming! It could be soon or late. Jesus said, "Ye know not when the time is" (Mk. 13:33). The time of the second coming is one of the "secret things" which belongs 'unto the Lord our God," and not to us (Deut. 29:29). "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mk. 13:22; Mt. 25:13; Mk. 13:35). Therefore, no man knows that Jesus is coming soon; neither does any one know that his coming in the far distant future. We just do not know when it will be! To say (or sing) that we know that it will be soon, is to say that we know more about it than the angels of heaven or even the Son of God himself (Mk. 13:22).

Many have tried to set the time for the return of the Lord, but just as many as have tried, have failed, and have been proven to be false prophets. William Miller set the time to be 1843, but Jesus did not come. He moved the time up another year, his coming would be October 22, 1844, but still he didn't come. Mrs. White predicted that he would come in 1856. She told those who were present at a particular conference that some of them would "be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Christ." That was in 1856, 139 years ago. All of those delegates have long since been dead, and Christ has not come. While the Bible teaches that we are to live in view of the Lord's coming, it is unscriptural to set the time as either soon or in the far distant future.

Connected with every war since his assention back to

heaven, there have been predictions of his return. These are based upon a perversion of a passage which in fact says that wars are no sign of his soon returning. Jesus said, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Mt. 26:6). The Time-setters think we ought to be "*troubled*" when we "*hear of wars and rumors of wars.*" But Jesus said, "*See that ye be not troubled . . . the end is not yet.*"

While no man knows the time of the Lord's return, the Father does know—it is set in his own mind (Mk. 13:32-33). When Jesus comes, the judgment will take place (Mt. 25:31-46). But the time is set. "He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world" (Acts 17:31). This "appointed" day has not yet come. When God gave the New Testament he knew that Christ would not come before 1995, for he had the day "appointed," and, to date, it has not arrived. Therefore he did not teach the first century Christians that Christ would come in their day. In light of the fact that Christ has not come yet, we know that God has never taught any one that Christ was coming prior to 1995. God never teaches falsely. Therefore, God did not teach people through the New Testament in the first century that Christ was coming in their lifetime.

Since the New Testament did not teach, when it was written in the first century, that Christ was coming before 1995. It did not then teach that he would come soon. The New Testament teaches now as it did then. It still teaches nothing as to the time of the second coming, other than, "Ye know not when the time is" (Mk. 13:33). If the New Testament did not teach when written that "Jesus is coming soon," it cannot teach it now; for it has not changed its teaching and meaning since it was written.

But there is another passage, often perverted to mean that Christ will "soon" come. Jesus said, "And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14). The "end" here referred to is the end of the Jewish nation, which came in A.D. 70. By that time the gospel had been preached "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23; Rom 10:18; Col. 1:6).

No one knows when the coming of the Son of God will be. Whether it will be soon or yet thousands of years in the future. We do know that he will come, and that he will come quickly,

suddenly and without warning. The thing for each of us to do is live so that we will be ready, whether it be in our life time or hundreds of years after our bodies have turned to dust (Mt. 24:44).

Parental Guidance

NEAL POLLARD

Moms and dads have a tremendous and divinely-given responsibility to their children. What does it mean to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6)? How does a parent "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4)? Studying God's word on this topic and searching out Bible answers helps provide parents with the tools to give children the guidance they desperately want.

BEGIN WITH DISCIPLINE

Proverbs abound about this need. The "rod" of discipline, including, corporal punishment, shows one's love of their children (cf. Proverbs 13:24), one's recognition of the responsibility in molding his or her children's character (cf. Proverbs 22:15), one's concern with the ultimate outcome of the child's spiritual development (cf. Proverbs 23:13), and one's involvement in providing his or her children with the skills necessary to face the world and the judgment (cf. proverbs 29:15). That discipline, in whatever form or forms are found to be most effective and reasonable, must be consistently administered to be effective. Children want guidance. They want to know the consequences of their actions, and what they should not do.

BE INVOLVED

Parents must take time with their children. They need an abundant supply of hugs and "I love you's." They need parents who are willing audiences, eager co-participants, and concerned supervisors. Too often when asked about their children's live's, parents are found answering, "I don't know." As stewards of their precious souls, parents must be aware of what goes on with their children. An unknown poet wrote the following lines:

Take a moment to listen today to what your children are

trying to say; Listen today whatever you do or they won't be there to listen to you. Listen to their problems, listen for their needs, praise their smallest triumphs, praise their smallest deeds; tolerate their chatter, amplify their laughter, find out what's the matter, find out what they're after. But tell them that you love them, every single night and though you scold them, be sure you hold them: Tell them "Everything's all right; Tomorrow's looking bright!" Take a moment to listen today to what your children are trying to say; Listen today, whatever you do, and they will come back to listen to you.

BE UNITED

Unity blesses the church (Ephesians 4:3). Unity is the oil that greases the wheels of progress in government. Unity is, likewise, the glue that holds together parental guidance. Children often try the game, "play one against the other." If parents cannot agree about the necessity and severity of discipline, the rules governing the households, the order of the home's priorities, and the decisions made by their spouse, children become emotionally lost. Too, disunity between parents creates hostility and resentment that permeates every facet of home life.

PUT GOD FIRST

On moral questions, parents must search out Bible answers. In the area of faithfulness, parents must demonstrate that God has top priority (Matthew 6:33). In decisions of recreation, God must always remain the center of the home. And, always, always, God's Word must be the constitution which governs the family! Children will learn that, in every situation that life presents, God's way is the right way (cf. Galatians 2:20). In the process, the everlasting souls conceived by loving parents and given by God's handiwork will have guidelines they can give their children and take all the way to the grave into eternity (cf. Psalm 119:105). "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have of him. Thy mother and thy father shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice" (Proverbs 23:24-25). Who are the glad, rejoicing parents in these two verses? They are parents who teach that righteousness and instill that wisdom in their children. With the Bible as their guide, parents can guide their children to serve, obey, and please the Lord.

Why You Should Pray

DAVID THURMAN

A little boy was watching an older man as they sat at nearby tables in a restaurant. The little boy turned to his mother and said, "Look mommy, that man is talking into his plate!" It seems that little boy had never seen someone bow his head and offer prayer. I suppose closing one's eyes and bowing one's head would look strange to a little boy who had no concept of prayer.

As our world becomes more and more secular with little regard for religion, prayer might seem old fashioned. With Heaven's Gate cultists killing themselves to "join a space ship that is trailing a comet," non-believers might think anyone who puts their hope in a supreme being is just as crazy. But there are good reasons to pray. Prayer can play a huge role in your life. Why should you pray?

BECAUSE PRAYER KEEPS US HUMBLE

I suppose it is hard to realize just how weak and dependent we all are. I am writing this article on a computer. But that computer wouldn't work without electricity. In fact, there is not much I have in my home that would be of any practical value without electricity. I am totally dependent on an outside power to keep my home running. I am dependent on transportation industries to keep food in my grocery store. I am dependent on a complex economy to keep jobs going and work available. We like to fool ourselves that we are self-sufficient and live on our own terms. But it just isn't true. From the gasoline we buy, to the food we eat, to the television we watch, all of it comes from the efforts and support of countless people and processes.

Prayer reminds us of this fact. The more we pray as Jesus instructed us to pray, the more we understand just how dependent we are. *"And He said to them, 'When you pray, say, 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation'"* (Luke 11:2-4). Jesus taught us to pray in such a way as to face and admit our weaknesses and need. From our daily food to our spiritual failures, from our dependent

status before a Holy God to our relationships with other people, our needs are exposed in prayer.

Why do you need to pray? Because it will remind you how fragile your life is. Your income, your health, your family can be at risk at any given moment. When you pray, you remind yourself of this fact. You recall that you are not at the center of the universe and are in fact, subject to forces and powers well beyond your control. Prayer keeps us humble.

BECAUSE PRAYER KEEPS TROUBLE AWAY

Jesus' model prayer included the phrase, *"And lead us not into temptation"* (Luke 11:4). When Jesus was about to be arrested, he spent much time in prayer. When He left his followers so He could pray alone, He encouraged them by saying, *"pray, that you may not enter into temptation"* (Luke 22:40). Jesus knew that prayer helped people make better decisions. He knew that prayer reminded people of the need to avoid cruel or evil choices. He knew that prayer could remind good people of the need to do good.

When you pray you remind yourself that good needs to be done and evil needs to be avoided. This can be a great tool for parents. Teach your kid to pray about their decisions. Who can tell a lie after asking God to bless a conversation? Who can have illicit sex after asking God to bless a relationship? Who can get drunk after asking God's help?

Not only can this help with kids, it can help in any difficult circumstance between people. If you pray before confronting a friend or co-worker, you are reminded to stay calm and under control. Even better, if you can pray with the person both are reminded of the need to do what is right and avoid *"entering into temptation."*

BECAUSE PRAYER CAN CHANGE GOD'S MIND

Jesus tells a wonderful parable about the power of prayer. A visitor shows up in the middle of the night. The host has no bread and so knocks on the neighbour's door to borrow some, even though it is very late. *"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs"* (Luke 11:8). Jesus' point is simple. If we will keep asking God for what we need and want, we can convince Him to open

up to us. God will do that because of our persistence if not because of anything else.

Jesus goes on to teach us how to do this. *"And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find knock, and it shall be opened to you"* (Luke 11:9). Prayer can actually convince the ruler of the universe, God himself, to change His mind! If we keep asking, confident He is listening and He is able to help, Jesus promises we will find the help we desire.

An Old Testament story demonstrates this point. Isaiah told King Hezekiah that he would die from his illness. But Hezekiah chose to pray. *"Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly"* (2 Kings 20:3). What did God do? he changed His mind! God sent Isaiah back to the king with a different message. *"I have heard your prayer. I will heal you . . . And I will add fifteen years to your life"* (2 Kings 20:5-6). It is clear that there are times that prayer can change the mind of God.

BECAUSE PRAYER CAN CHANGE US

Jesus prayed a fervent prayer, just as serious as Hezekiah's prayer. After warning His disciples to pray, *"He withdrew a stone's throw, and he knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done'"* (Luke 22:41-42). Jesus was facing His most severe test. He was about to be arrested, falsely convicted and crucified. He dreaded the path He was facing. He asked God to change His mind, but left it up to God to decide. God did not change His mind.

There are times we ask for things and God does not give us what we seek. This has nothing to do with our attitude, since, like Jesus, we can be sincere in our approach and still receive a negative answer. This has to do with God knowing what is best and us being willing to accept it. But even when we do not get the response we want, prayer is still good for us as it may change us. *"Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him"* (Luke 22:43). Jesus prayed hard but God still said, "No". But God didn't just abandon Him, nor will God abandon us. Even in a "no" God will find a way to build us up, strengthen us and bless us. When prayer doesn't change God's mind, it can change us so that we can face whatever is ahead. I

have seen ill people whose affliction never left them, but after prayer they were calm and serene even in the middle of their suffering. God may not grant you everything you ask, but He will bless you in the asking. Prayer can change us.

BECAUSE PRAYER IS THE ONLY RECOURSE

During recent weeks our country has been exposed to sad scenes of countless thousands of flood victims in the upper midwest. Repeatedly I have heard victims say all they had was prayer. Cynical politicians have called on their constituents to pray. People who haven't spoken to God in years were forced to seek Him, since that was all they had left. There are circumstances in life in which prayer is the only recourse.

Physicians can do wonderful things today. But they are limited. When illness comes and doctors struggle to cure, people turn to God. When jobs are lost and companies fail, people turn to God. When disasters strike (like floods) people call on God.

Jesus faced this issue as well. When His disciples could not heal a demon-possessed boy, they couldn't understand their failure. *"His disciples began questioning Him privately, 'Why is it that we could not cast it out?' And He said to them, 'This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer'"* (Mark 9:29). The disciples had tried to heal the boy by their own power. When it failed, there was nothing else to be done but turn to God and His power. Jesus knew this. He prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35). He prayed all night before choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12), and He prayed three times in the garden just prior to His arrest (Matt. 26:44). There are times in life when the only thing to do is pray.

RETURN TO GOD TODAY

The good news of the Gospel is that you can talk to this great God. He will listen if you will call on Him. Paul was told, *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sin, calling on His name"* (Acts 22:16). Paul called on God and was immersed, having his sins taken away. You too can call on God in baptism and have confidence that you too will be cleansed. Then you can pray the kind of prayers we have seen. *"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:16). Come to God today. Pray to God, today!