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Unspotted From The World

In James 1:27 the inspired man of God said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affiction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Please notice especially the last part of this verse where he talks about being unspotted from the world. We know that when one becomes physically ill, often times there are signs – spots or rash—that either precede the sickness or come along at the same time as the illness: Although they may be outward signs, they indicate an internal sickness, illness, or disease. They may even indicate the kind of sickness one has. It is important to be able to know the meaning of these so that one can begin to treat the illness as early as possible.

Not only do we recognize the importance of spots in diagnosing one's physical condition, but also in the earthly realm we know that when clothes, floors, and papers become spotted with dirt or with other impurities, it is time to wash them and to return them to their original state of cleanness. When a person gets his

hands, feet, face, or the whole body soiled with dirt or other unclean substances, it is a sign that one needs to wash.

The same is true in spiritual matters. James writes about pure religion, service that is rendered both to God and to one's fellowman. He talks about the kind of religion that is undefiled, the kind that is without spot, filth, and impurities, the kind that is not according to the teaching of men but is from God consists of visiting the fatherless and widows and remaining unspotted from the world.

The world that he speaks of refers to the ungodly things of life. When one does wrong, becomes immoral, and so on, then as a child of God that person becomes marked. Acceptance of the world will spot one both physically and spiritually. Physically, sin will bring repercussions. If one is immoral, diseases may follow. If one drinks alcohol it can rob him of his money, of his senses, and his physical health. But this is just the beginning. Paul says in Galatians 6:7, 8 that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He also says that if one sows to the flesh that he shall of the flesh reap corruption. Then spiritually, sin spots the soul. The individual who indulges in sin knows that he is wrong. His mind torments him. Also, his fellow Christians are aware of the sin that is in his life. They can see by his attitudes, his speech and his conduct that he has become worldly, sinful, and ungodly He then is marked by them, shunned, and rejected. As Paul wrote in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death."

If one is wise, when he begins to observe that he has become spotted with the sins of the world, he will recognize that this is the time to act. The spots are a sign of spiritual sickness and decay evidence that one has drifted away from the Lord, that one is lost If allowed to go unchecked they can finally destroy one physically and spiritually. Seeing the signs of spiritual sickness, this is a good time to take stock of what is happening and therefore to repent, to confess one's faults, and to pray with the brethren for forgiveness This, then, is the time to let the Great Physician cleanse and purify and forgive him of all of his sin. Christ knows what one's condition is and He also knows the remedy. He knows, too, when one

is willing to apply the remedy. Only then can he purify and cleanse and forgive the penitent one of all of his sin.

When one is in that pure state, being unspotted from the world, it is possible to stay in that position only as he puts forth the necessary effort. This means that he must ever realize his need for the Lord, must stay away from worldly things, keep his mind upon wholesome and godly things, and worship and serve God daily. Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23). Oh yes, it is possible to do that. But first one must begin to recognize the joy and fulfillment in spiritual matters, finding happiness and satisfaction in that instead of the things of this world. When one acts on his own, this is difficult, but with the Lord's help, and with the help of the brethren, it is altogether possible. The Apostle John reminds us, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).



Who Then Can Be Saved?

One day as Jesus was going with his disciples a man came running to him and asked him, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus knew that the man who asked him the question was very rich and loved his possessions more than any things else. So the Lord told him, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." When the rich man heard the Lord's reply to his question, the Bible says, "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great

possessions." Then the record says, "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED? And Jesus looking upon them saith, with man it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." (Mark 10:23-26). In this article I would like for us to consider the question: Who then can be saved?

Who then can be saved? The one who is willing to believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24). One must believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be saved. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). To believe in Christ means to trust in him, to quit trusting in the things of the world and to begin trusting in Christ. To believe in Christ means to give him the first place in every thing in our lives. (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 10:37, 38).

Who then can be saved? The one who is willing to repent. Jesus says, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). The Apostle Paul wrote, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30, 31). Just as one cannot be saved without faith in Christ, so one cannot be saved without repentance from sin. Because of sin Jesus had to leave heaven to come on earth to seek and save the lost. He was willing to die on the cross as a sinner, even though in him was no sin. (1 Peter 2:22-24). The Bible says that God "made him to

be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is therefore obvious that none can be saved without repentance. To be saved one must repent, that is, quit sinning, turn from sin to righteousness. To Christians at Rome the Apostle Paul wrote: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Romans 6:16, 17). Before becoming Christians they were servants of sin, but as Christians they became servants of righteousness. How? They repented.

Who then can be saved? The one who is willing to confess Jesus as the Lord and the Son of God. No one can be saved without the confession of Jesus. To confess means to own, to acknowledge. To be saved one must confess Christ, acknowledge him the Lord and the Son of God. At Romans 10:9, 10 we read, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Listen to Jesus, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32, 33). When Philip preached Jesus to Ethiopian eunuch and when eunuch believed and wanted to be baptized to become a Christian. Philip told him, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And the eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37). This is the confession that every one should make before baptism. This confession is made by mouth unto salvation, to receive salvation, to be saved.

Who then can be saved? The one who is willing to be baptized. One cannot be saved without having his sins forgiven. And the Bible says, one must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38). To be saved means to have one's sins washed away. And the Bible says, "And now why tarriest thou, arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts

(22:16). Salvation is in Christ, (Colossians 1:14), and the Bible teaches, through baptism we get into Christ. (Galatians 3:27). The Apostle Peter said at 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism saves us. And above all, Christ, the saviour said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Baptism is not a command for little babies, but all those who believe in Christ and repent of their sins and confess him their Lord must be baptised, immersed in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, to be saved.

Who then can be saved? The one who is faithful to the Lord even unto death. One who is willing to take his cross and follow him. After faith, repentance, confession and baptism, Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10). After becoming a Christian one can fall and be lost again. The Apostle Peter said, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them then the beginning. it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22). The Apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10: 12). Again, he said, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12). To remain a faithful Christian and in the saving state, it is necessary that one should pray and study the Bible, the word of God, daily, and attend worship services of the church every Lord's day and as well as on other days when the Bible study and other services are conducted, if at all possible. Study the life of Christ in the New Testament of the Bible and imitate him. Have the mind of Christ, (Philippians 2:5-8).

Chastisement Is For Our Good

Chastisement is an affliction, a difficulty, induced upon one for his advantage and correction. Chastisement is profitable to the child of God. It is a means of cultivating godliness and restraint in Christian character. To refuse or despise chastisement of the Lord is to refuse its value and godly fruits. "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom be receiveth" (Heb. 12:5).

The chastisements of the Lord may come in many forms. God, providentially, brings certain trials and afflictions on His people to correct them, to purge them, to discipline them in faith and righteousness. At times, His chastisement can be severe. God raised up the fierce Assyrians, "the rod of mine anger," to afflict unrepentant Israel (Isa. 10:5). God confessed His chastisements to Israel: "for I have wounded them with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased...I have done these things unto thee" (Jer. 30:14, 15). Under the severe hand of chastisement Israel gave up her sin of idolatry and again turned to serve her God Jehovah. His chastisement effected "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in Israel.

Every child of God receives chastisements from the loving hand of God. Chastisement, not from anger, not for cruelty, but because of God's love for His people. The chastening of the Lord is one of the many evidences that God loves His children, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6). He has the heavenly Father, loves His children, consequently He chastens them even as our own fathers, in their love for us, corrected and often afflicted us for our good. We loved and respected our fathers because they did afflict us. Sometime, the most tender and loving moment in the relation of sons with our fathers was as a result of the chastisement. The penitent son, now profited by the punishment, comes to a tender and loving father as a better son, and one to later become a better man.

It is true that "Now not chastening for the present seemeth to

joyous, but grievous" (Heb. 12:11). One might not appreciate the source of correction. He may consider such trials as "bad luck," or "just one of those things" that make life hard, even unjust. However, with God and the children of God there is no such thing as luck, destiny, or "just one of those things." God has the plan, He has a will and a way for man. When one accepts the chastening as from God above, allowing that discipline to bring him once again to a closer relationship with God, his Father, then indeed, he will be profitted by his orderal. The Scriptures say, "...afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 5:11-13).

When we receive adversity, when somber clouds hover over life, when the sting of rebuke is felt, let us not consider it lightly. Let us examine ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5). Let us search our hearts (Pro. 4:23). Let us consider the chastisement of the Lord and receive His corrections as faithful children under the hand of a loving and caring Father. Christians should not be discouraged when chastened by God, but should realize it is an evidence of His care and love for us, and therefore, be grateful.

Handling Aright The Word Of Truth

Grady M. Miller

In Second Timothy 2:15 the Apostle Paul offered these words of advice to the young evangelist Timothy: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Notice in particular the rendering of the last phrase of this verse in the American Standard Version: "...handling aright the word of truth." Paul warns Timothy that he must use that word properly.

It should be obvious to us all that it is just as possible to "wrongly divide" or "handle wrong the word of truth" as it is to handle it aright. The Bible contains numerous warnings concerning false teachers who are able to "shipwreck" the faith of others (1 Tim. 1:20). Peter tells us of certain false brethren who are ignorant and unstable; he declares that they "wrest...the scriptures unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Paul was highly disturbed that there were false teachers among the churches of Galatia who were perverting the true gospel into a false gospel that had no power (Galatians 1).

Furthermore, it should be just as obvious that false teachers are on hand today who are failing to "handle aright the word of truth." One unmistakable indication of this is the growing number of denominations, cults and sects which are springing up all across our land. Simple logic tells us that if everyone is handling aright the word of truth we would all be united in matters of faith; since we are not, someone has to be right—someone has to be wrong. Thus, we see failures today even among sincere people to "handle aright the word of truth."

Seeing the way things are, we long for the way things ought to be. The Holy Scriptures were meant to be USED, not ABUSED. There are many ways in which Scriptures may be abused: no doubt you have noticed these errors from time to time. One common mistake is to take Scripture out of context; that is, to apply a specific passage of Scripture to a situation or practice that the author was not even remotely considering. It has been observed, and rightly so, that a Scripture taken out of context becomes a pretext.

One abuse of Scripture which is prevalent today is the failure to distinguish between the two great divisions of the Bible: The Old Testament and the New Testament. It is commonplace to hear preachers hop back and forth from one covenant to another to pull out passages of Scripture which seem to support their views. However, this is a gross perversion of Scriptures.

We should all recognize that God has dealt with His creatures

under different laws down through the various ages. There was a covenant between Adam and Jehovah, as well as with Noah and Abraham. Later on, we find that God made His covenant with Israel through Moses. In New Testament times, however, the old law of Moses ended and the gospel of Christ came into effect (Heb. 9:15-17). Although we can certainly profit from a study of the Old Testament (Romans 15:4), the fact remains that we have been delivered from the law of Moses (Romans 7:6). Therefore, the gospel of Christ, as found in the New Testament, serves as our law today.

But, what is the application for us today? Just this: so many times passages of Scripture in the Old Testament which deal specifically with the atonement and worship under the Law of Moses are offered as answers to questions that New Testament subjects ask today. Thus, in answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" one may be instructed to obey commandments taken from the old law of Moses. Instead, a New Testament Christian can only result when a penitent believer obeys the New Testament gospel. Today, Jesus is our redeemer...not Moses (John 1:17).

While we certainly appreciate all of the Bible and agree with Paul that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Tim. 3:16), let us all recognize that the New estament gospel is our standard for today. May we all "handle aright the word of truth."

An Interesting Question

Lloyd E. Gale, Jr.

In a Bible study class the question was asked: "Does man ever change God's mind?" This was predicated upon the question of the effect of man's prayers. The question was concluding that, if man's prayer does not change the mind of God, then why should one pray?

To begin to correctly understand the truth in regard to this

question; we should understand that, if man was able to persuade God to change His mind, then the mind of God was evidently set wrong to begin with. This of a certainty cannot be true because of the omnipotence of God (Revelation 19:6; Job. 37:16).

The question also assumes that God has considered every matter and rendered His decision. If it was true that God has considered a specific matter and rendered His decision, then until and unless the facts change, God would be unable to change His will. We may illustrate this principle with this Scripture, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). God has declared His will in this specific matter and as long as a person refuses to comply such a person is condemned. However, should one so condemned change the facts, by complying with God's will, then the results will also be changed from condemnation to salvation. But note carefully that in such an instance man did not change God's mind but rather man changed the circumstances by obedience to God's will.

The reason why prayer can have an effect today is because God has not considered every matter to render His irrevocable will. Once God has declared His irrevocable will, all the prayer in the world can not change it. Jesus agonised over the lost condition of Jerusalem but was powerless to save it because they refused to obey God's will (Matthew 23:37).

The answer to this sincere inquiry may be found by understanding the nature of God's providence. We need to consider the fact that we are governed by God's laws. There are physical and spiritual laws which govern man. For example we recognize God's law of gravity and of inertia. If we violate these laws we realize that we will suffer the consequences. God will not suspend these laws for our benefit but may help us to find ways to live in compliance. A tightly secured rope may help us to live in compliance with the law of gravity; a banked curve to comply with ineria.

There are laws that govern physical health. If these laws are

violated we will suffer the consequences. When man finds himself in trouble, whatever the nature, his first action might be to go to God in prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16.) Since this is possible, a matter where God has not made an irrevocable decision, but one in which we find ourself in conflict with God's law, we may be confident that God will help us. After having fervently prayed we must direct our effects to finding a solution. In the case of physical health we seek the best possible medical help. We believe that God may also be working through natural means to help us. As Christians we believe that God rules over His laws and is actively involved in helping man. God has promised His faithful children love, care and protection (I John 5:14-15).

No, we cannot change God's mind but we believe that as long as our distress is due to a lack of harmony with God's law; that our Father in heaven will help bring us into harmony with His law. Man must change to meet God. "For I am the Lord, I change not;" (Malachi 3:6). "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). We conclude that the unchanging Lord hears and answers our prayers. Explain how he answers our prayers; we cannot but our faith assures us that He does.

Heaven And Those Who Will Be There

John Stacy

In Revelation 21:1-2 John said, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea, and I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In Revelation 21:12, we are told that heaven has a great wall with twelve gates and at the twelve

gates are twelve angels. We also learn from this text that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the twelve gates. In Revelation 21:14 John states that the walls of heaven have twelve foundations and names of the Apostles are written thereon. Heaven is a city that lies foursquare. It is twelve thousand furlongs in length. Heaven is a city of pure gold, like unto clear glass (Rev. 21:18). The foundations of the walls of our heavenly home are garnished with all manner of precious stones (Rev. 21:19). The gates of our eternal home are pearl and the streets are of purest gold (Rev. 21:21). How beautiful heaven must be! But if we are going to make heaven our home, need to know just who will be in heaven.

SPIRITUALLY DEVELOPED

May I begin by suggesting that II Peter 1:5-11 gives us a description of those who will be granted an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord. "In all diligence, add to vour faith virtue; to and virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness. love. For if these things be in you, and abound they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In this text Peter tells us that those who make a diligent effort to build upon the foundation of faith will be in heaven. Men must add virtue, that is moral power or energy, and strength. The word virtue also means vigor of soul and moral excellence. Knowledge, that is insight, understanding, or practical wisdom is an essential ingredient that we must add. In addition there is self-control, mastery over self. Men must reach a point where they will not let other people or things control them. Then men must add to their faith patience. The word patience means steadfastness, endurance, a never give up attitude. Brotherly

kindness, love of the brethren is necessary as well. Then we must add the ingredient of love. The word for love in the original language means to love the unlovable and the unlovely. This word refers to a love which knows no limits. It is a love that we cannot earn or merit. This word is the very one that's used for God's love for man. Like Paul, all we can do is pray that we might be able to comprehend its breadth, length, height, and depth (Eph. 3:18). Peter tells us that we should give diligence to make our calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. (II Pet. 1:10).

Secondly, in Revelation chapters two and three we learn that those who keep on overcoming will populate heaven. There will never be victory without war. We must strive or agonize to enter in by the narrow door. Jesus said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." We must fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith if the crown of life is to be ours (II Tim. 4:7-8). But how can we overcome? How can victory over sin and the Devil be ours? In Revelation 12:11, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and because they loved not their own life unto death."

Let's take a look at this text's component parts. First of all there is the blood of the Lamb that enables Jesus to be our propitiation. Paul said in Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood..." The word propitiation means to appease the wrath of God. Paul penned these words in Romans 5:9, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The blood of Jesus not only controls God's wrath, it redeems and washes us from our sins. Paul said in Ephesians 1:7 "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." John wrote in Revelation 1:5, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Then there is the word of testimony. Those who overcome are totally involved in communicating the good news of Jesus to the lost. Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." John wrote in Revelation 6:9, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

Christians can be victorious by giving their lives for God. They will live and they will die for God. Paul is a good example. Paul said in Philippians 1:21—23, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Paul, with great confidence, declares in II Corinthians 12:15, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Those who love Jesus and the church more than self will always be winners.

MARRIED CHRIST

Thirdly, those who die in the Lord will be in heaven. John wrote in Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea. saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." How do you get into the Lord? Romans 10:10 tells us that we believe unto; Acts 11:18 tells us that we repent unto; Galatians 3:26, 27, and Romans 6:3-6 tells us that we are baptized into. Death will be a blessed event for those who die in the Lord. Those in Christ will receive their etrnal rest.

Finally, in Revelation 19:7-9 John tells us, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true

sayings of God." From this text we learn that the bride of Christ the church, will be the centre of attraction at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The church is the bride of Christ. In Rom. 7:4 Paul, said, "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that hath been raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God." In II Corinthians 11:2 we read, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ." Note if you will, that those who make up the bride of Christ are those who have made themselves ready by their righteous deeds. Truly our works will follow us (Rev. 14:13). It will pay to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Mt. 6:33).

Will heaven be your home? Can you say with David, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever? (Psm. 23:6). If heaven is to be your home, God must be your Father. You must be born into the family of God. Jesus said in John 3:5, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God or the church of God make up God's house. Paul in I Timothy 3:15 said, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth." Only family members or children can share the glory of Christ (Rom. 8:17-18).

The Mountain Of The Lord's House

Keith A. Mosher, Sr.

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 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." (Isaiah 2:1, 2).

The popular theory today is that Jesus the Christ is to return to this earth to establish His kingdom for 1000 years. According to this doctrine, He will sit on a literal throne in the earthly city of Jerusalem and judge the nations. A proper understanding of Isaiah 2:1-4 should dispel such a pernicious teaching:

- 1. When are the "last days" of this prophecy? We can let the Bible speak eloquently on this matter. "God who at sundry time and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1, 2 with emphasis). When the Hebrew writer spoke, the time of the last days had already begun! On Pentecost, Peter quoted a prophecy (Joel 2:28-30) and stated on that day in A.D. 33 that "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Joel's prophecy began in the last days! The last days are the years of the Christian dispensation in which we are now living, not some millenium to follow.
- 2. What is the "mountain" which is of the "Lord's house?" Again let the Bible speak. Nebuchadnezzar asked God's spokesman, Daniel, to interpret a dream. The vision had concerned four world empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) in the form of a huge image whose head was gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and things of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part iron and clay. (Daniel 2:31-33). A stone was cut out without hands, and "...the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth, (Dan. 2:35b).

In the interpretation of the dream, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that the stone which became a great mountain is God's Kingdom, (Dan. 2:44, 45) and this kingdom shall put asunder the entire image, Daniel concludes by saying: "...and the interpretation is sure" (Dan. 2:45b). This kingdom was to begin in the fourth empire removed from Nebuchadnezzar's. The Roman empire was the fourth. God's kingdom or mountain began then in A.D. 33 in the times of the Roman Caesar's. It is not still to come, unless one believes the Roman empire has not yet existed!

3. What is the "Lord's house" in Isaiah's prophecy? Again

we let the Bible tell us. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15 with emphasis). The Lord's house is the church. Isaiah prophesied that the kingdom, or the church, would begin in the Christian dispensation or last days. This is why Jesus used the terms kingdom and church interchangeably in Matthew 16:18, 19. The kingdom, of the church is the mountain of the Lord's house!

4. This kingdom, of the church, would be established in the "top of the mountains" (i.e. above all kingdoms) and "exalted above the hills" (Hebrew parallelism, Isaiah says the same thing Then, "All nations would flow unto it." The marvelous mystery of the church of Christ, hidden so long from the Jews and spoken of by their own prophets, was that the Gentiles would have a place in the coming kingdom. (See Eph. 2:11-16). All people would flow unto this kingdom who obeyed the entrance requirements of water baptism and spiritual renewal set forth by its King (John 3:5). "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him. How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Isaiah continues his prophecy in Isaiah 2:3, 4. In the third verse he indicates that people will become so excited about this new kingdom that many will tell others about it. And people will learn that only in that kingdom or church of Christ can they learn of God's ways and walk in his paths. And this church or kingdom will have its beginning from Zion or Jerusalem. In A.D. 33, Peter stood in Jerusalem and announced the new kingdom, told people how to enter it and how to stay in it (Acts 2:38, 42). "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and

in prayers." And the great blessing is that this is a peaceful kingdom that does not advocate, war, but love (Isa. 2:4). We pray that all people will see the beauty of Isaiah's prophecy, its fulfillment in Christ's church and that all will enter that kingdom before stepping into eternity. Hear the good news of Jesus' death burial and resurrection for you and repent (decide to do God's will) and be immersed for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). The Lord will add you together with all of the other citizens of his kingdom. the church of Christ, the church of God, the pillar and the ground of the truth. "Praising God and finding favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Then you will be prepared for what is actually to take place at the second coming of Christ-the judgment and the end of the world (Matthew 25;31-46 and II Peter 3:10-13). that time, the precious "mountain of the Lord's house," or kingdom of the church of Christ, will be delivered up to God (I Cor. 15:24).

Man's Doctrine Summarized

A candidate who desires membership in a Baptist church:

- 1. Relates the experience of his salvation.
- 2. The church decides if they have "passed from death unto life."
- 3. If it is so judged the church votes to accept the candidate into membership upon baptism.
- 4. Upon baptism the candidate is accepted as a member of the Baptist church and may partake of the Lord's Supper.

Please consider the following conclusions of the above teachings.

1. A sinner can be saved and go to Heaven without ever being a member of the Baptist Church.

- 2. The vote of the Baptist church determines whether or not the SAVED:
 - a. May be baptized into the Baptist Church.
 - b. Have the privillege of partaking of the Lord's Supper.
- 3. It is possible to be acceptable to God without being accepted by the Baptist church.

When you consider the conclusions it is appalling that man would assume so much power in the area of religion.

CONSIDER GOD'S WORD

In Acts two chapter a great multitude heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. They were informed of their spiritual condition (2:36), convicted of their sin (2:37), and ask for directions. The inspired apostle Peter told these penitent believers to: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). With other words Peter exhorted them, (2:40), and the ones who received the words of Jesus were baptized (2:41). About three thousand precious souls were added to the church by God himself. (2:47).

The same action which obtained forgiveness of sin is also that which secured membership in the church or body of Christ.

HEARD THE GOSPEL, Acts 2:21-35 CONVICTED, 2:36 TOLD TO REPENT, 2:38 BE BAPTIZED, 2:38 GOD ADDED SAVED TO THE CHURCH, 2:44

Please note that no one voted on those who were converted on Pentecost, nor: the EUNUCH (Acts 8:26-40), SAUL (Acts 9: 1-15 also Acts 22:1-21), CORNELIUS (Acts 10), THE PHILIP-PIAN JAILER (Who was baptized the same hour of the night, (Acts 16:19-34), LYDIA (Acts 16:11-16). It is also very appro-

priate to ask where man receives the authority to determine the spiritual activity of one who has "passed from death unto life." Only the Lord can so direct.

Responsive Reply To "Sing or Sin"

John T. Polk II

A reader in East Tennessee writes to take issue with the article "Sing or Sin," which we are happy to receive. We are willing to search the Scriptures with anyone who wishes to reason together (Isa. 1:18; Acts 17:11).

Our reader has not distinguished truth from error, for the letter said, "You make it plain you don't like music, but there are people who do." REPLY: Nothing in the article questioned "music," but did question unauthorized music in worship to Almighty God. Since God seeks true worshippers to worship Him in spirit and truth (Jno. 4:23-24), no worship is acceptable to Him unless He has given authority in the Bible, His Word. God's commandments are truth (Psa. 119:172), and no worship is acceptable to Him without being guided by truth. Hence, whatever music God desires will be found in His Word. The Bible sets forth, in every passage on the subject of music in worship by Christians, that singing, or vocal music, is specified (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Jas. 5:13. Throughout God's Word, the principle is taught that all else is excluded when God specifies what He wants to be done. Therefore, mechanical instruments are excluded by virtue of the fact that God has directed us to sing and nowhere given Christians authority to "sing and play."

Our reader would array what people want against what God wants. What people want should not govern what is done in religion, but what God wants (2 Cor. 10:18; Acts 10:34-35). The reader said, "I play a guitar and my husband does also. We feel like God is pleased with it..." REPLY: Saul of Tarsus, before he was a Christian, made havoc of the church of Christ, with a good

conscience, by thinking himself that it was alright (Acts 26:9; 23:1; Gal. 1:13). This was the time he later described as "Ignorant" (I Tim. 1:13), because he was not guided by God's Word. The reader needs to consult the New Testament, not herself and her husband, to find out whether or not she is right.

The letter continues, "David was a man after God's own heart and he tells us in Psalms 144 and 150 to praise the Lord on stringed instruments." REPLY: That David, when anointed King of Israel, was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), is uncontested. That this approved everything David did is certainly not the truth. David unlawfully moved the ark and displeased God (I Chron, 13:1:14; 15:2); practiced polygamy (I Chron, 14:3; Mal. 2:15); committed adultery, murder, and deceit (2 Sam. 11: 2-27; Psa. 51:1-4). Is the reader contending that these acts of David are for us, also? Surely not! But if not, then the reader even realizes that David was after God's heart in the things he did in obedience to God, not in everything he did. Then where in the Law of Moses, did David have God's authority for the use of mechanical musical instruments? I can read where David authorized such (I Chron. 15:16), but not where God did so. God pronounced a "woe" upon those who followed David's example with such instruments (Amos 6:1, 5). Even if God did authorize such for David's time, we must not follow David today, for his tomb is with us even yet, but God has raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:29-32). Psalms 144 and 150 also mention war, pasaltery, tenstringed instruments sheep, oxen, falsehood, vanity, trumpet, harp, timbrel, dance, organs, loud cymbals, and stringed instruments. How may of these will our reader bind in worship today? If one keeps a part of Moses' law today, then all of it is yet in force (Gal. 5:3). But the New Testament writers argued that the entire Law of Moses has been aemoved from force today (Rom. 7: 1-4; Gal. 2:16; 3:10-14; 5:4; Col. 2:14-16). To continue to force any practice done under the Law of Moses today is to bind an old law or else to bind a practice illegally done then. Either way, it is to err!

The letter states, "Most people like you and others preach the way they believe it should be and not the way God wants it."

REPLY: The reader is precisely wrong, for we preach it the way God wants it (I Peter 4:11). Those who will not abide by God's Way and misrepresent the Bible to suit their practice are the ones in error. Often the appeal to "reason together" (Isa. 1:18) falls on deafened ears, hard hearts, and blind eyes. (Matt. 13:13-17).

The letter says, "I don't want any more of your lies printed on paper or anything else sent to my home anymore. I want to be aware of false teaching and doctrines such as you are printing. Surely you don't expect people to believe it." REPLY: Indeed, we do not expect anyone with a closed mind and Bible to believe anything! God will judge. We are seeking those whom God seeks and only those who will hear and study the Bible fall into this category (Jno. 10:27; Acts 17:11). This reader obviously does not. Do you, dear reader? Will you continue to study God's Word with us (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17)?

Speaking Incorrectly Of Jehovah

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Near the end of the intensely interesting book of Job these words from the lips of the Lord appear: "And it was so, that, after Jehovah had spoken these words unto Job, Jehovah said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42: 7 Emphasis added). Humanity today still does the same thing that these three so—called friends of Job did in an ancient age of the past.

SPEAKING INCORRECTLY OF THE CREATOR

The Bible correctly portrays Jehovah God as the First Cause of all created things and beings. Genesis 1:1 states: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The majestic and orderly account of God's preparing this world to be inhabited

by man is thrillingly unfolded in the Bible's initial chapter. God's organic creation on this earth consists of the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom and man—the climax of earthly creatures. inorganic creation is seen in the earth, sun, moon, stars and other heavenly bodies. Jehovah's creative explanations do not harmonize with the godless guesses of blatantly bold unbelievers. Little finite man seeks to dethrone the Mighty Maker and fill the seat of authority as to how things first originated with his own puny presence. In what many consider to be a group of infallible pronouncements concerning origins, he leaves no room for God and creation. He beholds o universe of beauty, order and precision and yet denies such has an active Architect, a mighty Maker and a guiding Governor in its past and present functions. Everything, he blatantly affirms, is here by Sheer Chance. Man has come from simple forms of life and through a multitude of changes of one kind into another kind-according to present day evolutionary guesses. Organic evolution robs man of a Maker above, a soul within, a divine origin from the beginning of creation and no other life beyond this short one he now experiences. There is nothing attractive in its entire make-up. Neither the atheistic nor the theistic evolutionists speak correctly for Jehovah God because neither system rests upon truth. Both are devices of Satan devilishly designed to circumvent truth. I have no hesitation at all in saying that one cannot be an evolutionist and an approved Christian at the same time. Those who think theistic evolution and the Christian religion can exist side by side still have much to learn both about Christianity and what evolution really claims to be. No heart is big enough for both systems. They are diametrically opposed. A cowardly toleration of evolution has already done irreparable damage to the hearts of many young people. It is time to get set for the defense of God's great truths in Genesis one and two and cease speaking incorrectly of Deity's actions in these two great chapters.

SPEAKING INCORRECTLY OF GOD'S PRESERVING POWERS

Man not only denies God's hand in creation but also His power to preserve what He had made. Everything is kept going by natural law and means they continually proclaim. But who is

behind natural law? Has there ever been a law minus a lawmaker or lawgiver? If so, HOW? To the students of ancient laws Assyrian, Babylonian, Grecian and Roman codes all imply ancient lawmakers among these various people of the dim past. "This is the law of the land" presupposes a lawgiver and someone to execute the same. Natural law likewise presupposes a lawgiver and someone to see that it is executed. The sacred scribe of Hebrews informs us that Jesus upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1: 3). Those who deny an almighty power resides at the governing controls of the universe had better be doubly thankful they are grossly mistaken in their naive notions! If they were right, they would not be around to tell it nor would we be here to listen to their blatant blasphemy against Heaven's God and His preserving powers and providential protection over His people is another way men speak incorrectly of Him.

SPEAKING INCORRECTLY OF GOD'S BOOK

Confused voices in our midst maintain that the Bible is unreliable. They cast aside its message as being out of date and completely irrelevant for the needs of modern man. They claim to have discovered contradictions with the Sacred Volume. Legends, myths and much folklore are abundantly found therein according to their pernicious pronouncements. They thus rob the Book of the infinite Jehovah revealed therein, the sinless Son of God who is its central personality and the infallible Spirit who unerringly inspired its very production for mortal man's benefit. These modern voices of confusion "has not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job. 42:7).

SPEAKING INCORRECTLY OF HIS SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY

Advocates of Papal infallibility and Protestant powers to legislate have robbed Jehovah of His sole authority in the religious realm. Binding pronouncements from the Vatican Occupant take the place of each "thus saith the Lord" to more than a half billion Roman Catholics. In Protestant circles numerous religious dignitaries have clothed themselves with the assumed right to legislate in the field of religious thought and activity. In the latter part of

the 1960's Cumberland Presbyterian leaders revised their eighty-three year old creed. The new one for the 1960's allowed sufficient room for the evolutionary dogma. Before 1910 a prominent Protestant creed had all babies born in sin; after 1910 they were not born in sin. During the 1970's changes in creeds have been made to allow for women preachers and for homosexuals to fill pulpits. Creed makers have consistently spoken that which is wrong as touching Jehovah God and His Great Cause. Creeds speak incorrectly of God by adding to His word, by subtracting from His word and by substituting something in its stead. Irrelevent men are right now working on a Condensed Bible. They will have Jehovah's saying far less than He says in an Entire Bible. This, too, is speaking incorrectly of Jehovah God. Snch is a denial of His supreme authority.

Enslavement

Curtis Dowdy

One of the darkest periods in the history of mankind is that of human enslavement. Although we think in terms of enslavement being that of one human to another, many things enslave. Some are enslaved by tobacco, alcohol or other drugs; others are slaves to worldliness and materialism. Nevertheless, I want us to consider another form of enslavement which we may have thought little about; namely, enslavement to error and false concepts. Like other forms of enslavement, false concepts and errors are difficult to obtain release from.

The truthfulness of the above statement is found in the dealings of Jesus with His disciples. Matthew records, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." (Matt. 16: 21, 22). The disciples, concept of Messiah was that of a political-military King who would reign and rule in much the same way as had David. Jesus had taught the twelve in plain enough

language that His reign and rule would be that of a Suffer ing Servant who would command His people through the power of love and not of force. Still the disciples failed to understand because they were enslaved to the false concept of a materialistic kingdom. Their error was in not allowing their minds to be "renewed" and to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2). Inspite of many great and wonderful events which should have turned them from their false views, it was not until after the resurrection that the disciples won their freedom from the error of this false concept.

We must not be too hard on them because many today are still enslaved to various errors and false concepts, none of us are completely immune. Among them are:

MORALITY, HONESTY AND SINCERITY EQUALS SALVATION

It is certainly true that God requires a fine morality with an honest and sincere heart, but these alone will not bring one into a state of righteousness. Should this have been the case there would have been no need for Jesus to die. Salvation is founded upon the Perfect Sacrifice. "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" (2 Cor. 5:21). Those who are accounted righteous are in Christ, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Now no where does the Bible say that morality, honesty and sincerity puts one into Christ. Thus, we must get away from the old concept that this trio is sufficient to save.

BELIEF ON JESUS IS THE POINT AT WHICH SALVATION COMES

Stated another way this concept is, salvation is by faith alone. Belief on Jesus is crucial, but that within itself stops short of conversion. Conversion is a process that requires faith, faith that "works by love" in submitting to the holy will of Jesus. Jesus stated it clearly when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Far from earning salvation when one is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27) he is exercising faith that saves through reliance on the merits of Christ's work. In reality the one who refuses baptism "into Christ" is depending upon something other than Christ for salvation.

CHRISTIAN, GOING TO CHURCH

"Having been baptized, I will be saved in heaven If I wear the name of Christ and go to church." As we wrote above, baptism is certainly required to put one into Christ, but that presupposes an attitude of discipleship. Discipleship is more than wearing the name of Christ and "going to church." Matthew speaks of the disciple, but Luke records Jesus saying, "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Take note that emphasis upon discipleship is DAILY. When one is baptized into Christ a place of beginning has been found, and then a daily walk in the Master's will will bring him to the heavenly abode. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7).

In conversation between a chief captain and Paul the subject of freedom was discussed. The captain said, "With great sum obtained I this freedom," but Paul remarked, "I was free born" (Acts 22:28). Although they spoke of Roman citizenship and its freedom" the truth is that all of us are born free of error and false concepts, but we tend to loose that freedom as we grow up. We will obtain it again only at great cost in time and study of the Book God has given to guide people to freedom.

We hold in our hands the key to freedom-USE IT!

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

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