

Bible Talk

VOL. 2

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INTRODUCTION

What is Bible Talk? It is simply talking about the Bible, teaching lessons based on what the Bible says, and encouraging people to go to the Bible for their authority in all that they do and say in the name of religion.

Michael L. King, preacher for the Central Church of Christ in Cleveland, TN, U.S.A. has written and recorded a series of lessons for a phone service where people can call a certain number day or night and hear what he has to say. We have taken those same lessons, with Bro. King's permission, and printed them here in this form.

This material is arranged in a question and answer format. The author is committed to giving a Bible answer to each question. Perhaps you will find answers to a number of your own questions in these pages. That is why we are sharing them with you.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi
Nov. 1, 1990

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Question 1 : Does Jesus take delight in our hurting in that he required that we mourn?

Answer : Not at all! Reference is being made to Matt. 5:4 where Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." To mourn is to "feel or express grief or sorrow, especially for the dead; grieve" (Reader's Digest Ency. Dict.). What then did our Lord mean and what constitutes divinely sanctioned mourning?

May be the best way to explain it is to learn foremost what it is not. Mourning in this context is not grieving for the dead, though doing so is not wrong (Jn. 11:35). This kind of mourning is not a moral quality for the heathen and animals grieve over the carcass of a fallen companion. It is not to be confused with sorrow of this world--despair, disappointment, or depression. We all at times feel forsaken, no good, or that no one loves us. It is easily confused with **moaning**. **Moaning** is saying, "Look what God has done to me." A **mourner** says, "Look what I have done to God." Solomon was a moaner when saying, ". . . all is vanity and a striving after the wind" (Ecc. 1:2-14). David demonstrated a contrasting spirit, that of true mourning when he prayed, ". . . my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight.." (Ps. 51:2-4). Moaning is self-centered while mourning is God-centered. Grieving over sins constitutes real mourning!

Through properly-directed grief and personal introspection, the sinner can realize his hurt to God which is powerful motivation for genuine repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). God therefore, does not want us to continue grieving over the same sin, but to seek forgiveness. When man seeks forgiveness in God's appointed way, there is a comfort that follows that the world cannot know, nor enjoy the "Seasons of refreshing" that can come from knowing that sins have been blotted out

(Acts 3:19). David experienced the change and realized that he found mourning for his sins, "His anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5; 11, 12).

Question 2 : Why is the Lord's Supper regarded as 'a church ordinance' but not 'washing feet'? Did not our Lord institute both?"

Answer : The Lord and His disciples were in the upper room, celebrating the last passover Jesus would observe with His disciples (Jn. 13:1-15). Judas had already perfected his plans to betray the Lord (Jn. 13:2). All His disciples now surrounding the table, Jesus rose and began to wash their feet. Peter flatly refused to allow the Lord to wash his due to pride (Jn. 13:8). Jesus purposefully performed this task to demonstrate the real role of a teacher. Jesus informed him that "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Peter responded by saying, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus was interested in knowing if they understood what He had done. They were amazed because their teacher was doing this condescending task. This is instruction for the benefit of individuals, that they might serve each other, never was it given as a church ordinance. Jesus did it as an object lesson on humility. Notice also, that the washing took place, not as a ceremonial act, but because of their feet being soiled and weary from dusty travel and wearing sandals. It only appears in one other place (I Tim. 5:10) and considered there as a "good work" for individuals to follow not churches! It was not practiced until the fourth century as a church ordinance, after the apostasy had already begun. The Lord was interested in showing His disciples of "what sort of stuff" they were made. They were seeking positions of preference and preeminence,

but the Lord was leaving them behind to serve, and therefore, gave them an example.

The Lord's Supper was given in the form of a command for the church when assembled (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-30). It is to be observed weekly, to assist us in remembering Him, showing what He has done. Footwashing was done to show what we have done, served in humility! If done today, it would be done as a kind gesture not a church ordinance.

Question 3 : Is God getting even with us when we are made to experience trials?

Answer : Not necessarily. Sometimes we set ourselves up for difficulties, trials, and temptations as a result of our own appetites (James 1:14, 15). If God so desires, He reserves the right to execute vengeance upon His creation (Rom. 12:19), though it must be remembered that our God is just (John 5:30).

The disposition of the one experiencing trials must be examined as well. The optimist (operating by faith) would find good resulting, but the pessimist (faithless) would find them devastating. James gave the right attitude to have (James 1:2-4). We are to "count it all joy" and "take pleasure in my sufferings," because God "Chastens those whom He loves." (James 1:2; 2 Cor. 12:10; Heb. 12:6).

Trials can be precious! We often attend "The school of hard knocks" in order to learn a greater dependence upon God. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 10:12). Sometimes "It is better for me to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting" (Ecc. 7:2), and "Sorrow is better than laughter for by it the countenance is made better" (v.3). Patience is the product of trials, sometimes

referred to as “steadfastness under persecution”, which helps us to realize maturity. We can see God better because of reverses. It has been said that “A rainbow is formed by heaven’s tears.” The best is often made to surface through hard times. Drought causes the weak to wilt and the strong to become stronger. It is hard to realize that a diamond and a piece of coal are both basically carbon. The difference emerges when the “fire” is put to them. There is a song that says, “I am just an ole piece of coal, but I’m going to be a diamond someday.” That may be true of more of us than can realize it at present. Obedience is learned through trials and suffering. Jesus Himself learned obedience from, and became perfect through suffering (Heb. 5:8, 9). It seems that we are recipients of salvation similarly.

Question 4 : “What is the proper procedure for making a monetary gift to God?”

Answer : Your question is appreciated because there are so many concepts and ideas prevailing as to how, when, and why we are to give. It is important that we understand what the Bible teaches on this vital subject.

Several examples appear in the Bible where the fine art of giving was exercised, demonstrating particularly the heart’s disposition. Abraham was willing to offer his son in sacrifice in order to make God happy. He did not argue with God, dispute His judgment, or even accuse God of being unfair and too demanding. Abraham had given his heart to God already, then, willing to give his son in the flesh (Gen. 22). God gave His Son as a “ransom for many,” manifesting His genuine concern for mankind and His unselfishness. His love, like that of Abraham was motivated by LOVE (Jn. 3:16). The early Christians gave all their goods to help those who were

experiencing hard and difficult times (Acts 5). The believers at Corinth “gave of themselves” which resulted in their gifts of “things” (2 Cor. 8:5).

The instruction was given for Christians to “give as you have been prospered” when gathered together on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:2), with cheerfulness “as we have purposed in our hearts” (2 Cor. 9:6, 7). Note from the above passages that they were giving liberally as faithful stewards of God.

Giving was for: the preaching of the gospel (I Cor. 9:13, 14); to care for the saints in need (Rom. 15:26); for those in need and to fulfill the bearing of fruit as charged in Phil. 4:15-19. When Biblical giving is performed, God is obeyed (Rev. 22:14), and “to obey is better than sacrifice” (I Sam. 15:22). God is glorified when we give and express our adoration in accordance to His will (Eph. 3:21).

There is no instruction found in the Bible for: Taxing members, church dinners, rummage sales, pie suppers, shows, raffles, entertainment, or assessments. The right way is God’s way; given from the heart, willingly and generously?

Question 5 : “Who is Satan and where did he come from?”

Answer : The name means “an adversary,” and by implication, the enemy of God. He is also called the devil, which means slanderer, Apollyon which means destroyer and deceiver, which describes his purpose and work. He is also identified, in the scriptures, as the angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11), prince of the world (Jn. 12:31), a liar, and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). He was an angel who, because he was puffed up with pride (I Tim. 3:6), was cast out of heaven (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7-9), and became the leader of all fallen angels who were also in

rebellion against God.

Alexander Cruden made some interesting observations about the devil that I find enlightening and in harmony with scripture. "By collecting the passages where Satan, or the devil is mentioned, it may be observed that he fell from Heaven with all his company; that God cast him down from thence for the punishment of his pride; that, by his envy, malice, sin, death and all other evils came into the world; that by the permission of God, he exercises a sort of government in the world over his subordinates, over apostate angels like himself: that god makes use of him to prove good men, and chastise bad ones; that he is a lying spirit in the mouth of false prophets, seducers, and heretics; that it is he, or some of his, that torment or possess men; that inspire them with evil designs, as he did David, when he suggested to him to number his people; to Judas, to betray his Lord and Master; and to Ananias and Sapphira, to conceal the price of their field. That he roves full of range like a roaring lion, to tempt, to betray, to destroy, and to involve us in guilt and wickedness; that his power and malice are restrained within certain limits, and controlled by the will of God. In a word, that he is an enemy of God and man, and uses his utmost endeavors to rob God of his glory, and men of their souls."

His destiny is the "lake of fire" for ever and ever which he will share with all the wicked of the race, in torment, never ceasing (Matt. 25:41).

Question 6 : "Does God condone a man being married to more than one woman at the same time?"

Answer : Not at all! Polygamy is the proper term for it. It was practiced in Old Testament history, practiced by some religious groups of recent decades until the law bore down on

them, and practiced today in somewhat an "underground" manner. It is the act of having more than one wife at the same time. Considered by scripture as adultery (Mt. 5:31, 32).

It was introduced by Lamech (Gen. 4:17, 19) who was the sixth from Adam, a descendant of Cain. Following Lamech's disobedience, many disregarded God's wishes and practiced Polygamy (Gen. 6:1, 2). Numerous of the patriarchs and kings of Israel practiced polygamy. Among the patriarchs (Gen. 16:1-16; 25:1, 6; 28:9; 29:23, 28; 36:2, 3); judges (Judges 8:30); Levites (Judges 19:1); commoners (I Sam. 1:1, 2); and kings (I Sam. 27:3; 2 Sam. 3:7; 5:13; I Chron. 14:3; I Kings 11:1-3; 2 Chron. 11:21).

This practice became a source of domestic discord (Gen. 16:4-6; 21:1-21; 29:21-30:24; I Sam. 1:1-8). Many of the Hebrews indulged in unrestrained polygamy. Female slaves often became concubines, resulting in the household being divided into small groups, consisting of the mother and her offspring.

Although the Mosaic code recognized polygamy (Deut. 21:15), an attempt was made to limit the number of wives one man might possess (Deut. 17:17). Please read Ex. 21:10, 11; Lev. 18:17, 18; 20:14.

God never actually sanctioned polygamy although it was quite widespread among the Israelites. The practice came by disobedience and could never have been sanctioned by Jehovah. Among the noblest people, marriage was held in high esteem. Hosea protested against a plurality of wives, and indicated that monogamous marriage was a symbol of the union of Jehovah with Israel (Hos. 2:19-23), the same being true with Christ and His church (Eph. 5:21-27). Isaiah implied that idolatry and polygamy were counterparts (Isa. 57:3-8). The prophet Malachi pleaded for absolute marital fidelity (Mal. 2:14-16). The Lord insisted on one husband for one wife (Matt. 19:5-9; I Cor. 6:16). Read the consequences for

violation of such (I Cor. 6:9).

Question 7 : "I hear the term Hypocrite used often. What does it mean? Is this a Bible term?"

Answer : Webster defines it as: "a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion; one who affects virtues or qualities he does not have." We usually describe it in simple language as "claiming to be something you're not." There is a close kin to being a hypocrite, lying, and being deceitful. The Psalmist acknowledged the fact that the Lord would destroy such kind (Ps. 5:6, 9). Such an one is described as giving honor to God with the lips, "but have removed their heart far from me" (Isa. 29:13). They profess Him, but live as reprobates (Titus 1:16). Not only do we perform as hypocrites towards God, but also "speak peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth wait for him" (Jer. 9:8).

Following, are some examples of hypocrites in the Bible: Jacob impersonating Esau (Gen. 27:24); Jacob led to believe that Joseph had been killed and the blood on his coat was his own, when in reality, that of a goat (Gen. 37:31, 32); Ishmael led a group to death by artificial tears which lured them into following him to Gedaliah, but were cast into a pit (Jer. 41:6, 7). Likewise in the New Testament: Herod in His search for baby Jesus, indicated he wanted to worship Him (Matt. 2:8); Pharisees praying in the busy streets (Matt. 6:5); Those who were trying to correct everyone else, but oblivious to their own faults (Matt. 7:5); Those who were mentioned as having righteous mouths, but unrighteous hearts (Matt. 15:7, 8). And of course Judas who kissed Jesus, only to signal to the captors who Jesus was (Matt. 26:48, 49).

There are other ways to reach the same ungodly end

today. Do you say nice things to your neighbours, yet “stab them in the back” when not in their presence? Are you the same person on the job that you are in worship? Do you treat your parents with the same respect behind their back as you do to their face? Are you as loyal to your mate away from home as within the home? Note our Lord’s warning to all in Prov. 23:7 and Matt. 16:6.

Question 8 : “How can I discipline my child and let him know I love him at the same time?”

Answer : If you have disciplined your child, you have made a marvelous statement of love already! We are living in a society plagued by the “things syndrome.” Providing for our children (I Tim. 5:8) is only one way of expressing our love and is usually not the most effective way. We try to send our “love messages” to our children via things, because it is more convenient for us as parents. You can rest assured that it is not usually in the child’s best interest! Caution must be taken as we walk the thin line between “motherly love” and “smotherly love.”

Have you noticed how we provide the best of lessons, training, membership in the 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and participate in organized sports with dedication. These in and of themselves are good, but they are sometimes involved because we are afraid to say “No!” Seldom is emphasis given to Bible study opportunities, and worship unheard of.

Constantly giving your child everything he asks for is NOT the best way to show your love. Being overly protective is NOT the way to show your love to your child either. This is especially true when they have reached adulthood.

Do you really love your children? Sure you do! The question is, how is it to be shown? Please give some thought to

the following scriptural perspective on expressing love.

We need to show our love to our children by: 1) telling them we love them; 2) Caring enough to discipline (Prov. 13:24; 3) being able to say no; 4) providing for their physical needs (I Tim. 5:8); 5) showing them respect (Eph. 6:4); 6) helping them grow into an independent person (the time comes when we need to cut the apron strings, (Gen. 2:24); and 7) instructing them in the ways of righteousness (Matt. 16:26).

Now, who are you kidding? Are you putting into your child that which you really want to see coming back at you in what seems to be instant replay? The points mentioned above will reconcile that which appears to be of conflict in love.

Question 9 : "Is it O.K. to continue using gas powered automobiles for transportation even though almost every scientist agrees that their gases are destroying the planet and making it warmer?"

Answer : A good question, but difficult to answer with a book, chapter, and verse. It is my practice to always give a "thus saith the Lord" for answers in Bible Talk. I will make some observation in an effort to acknowledge our querist question.

God created the heavens and the earth, a part of which is the firmament, the realm of which we speak. Upon the completion of it He said that "it is good" (Gen. 1:17, 18). True it is that the heavens are wonderfully made though it was at first "without form and void" (Gen. 1:2). God gave rhyme and reason to the universe, balancing all the gases and elements ever so meticulously. True it is that if ozone layer is thinned, more direct rays of the sun will parch our earth and all the inhabitants upon it. I have read that if this were to happen skin cancer would become more and more prevalent. This awareness only confirms that there is a God and creator.

I suppose that I could be considered an environmentalist, respecting God's creation and wanting to preserve it, my life, and those of the generations to follow. I am not an alarmist. The life expectancy has increased within the past couple of decades from around 60-72 years of age. I am in hopes that significant improvements will occur, correcting this problem. In the days of our Lord, people were killed by chariots and drowned in the Sea of Galilee, but neither were outlawed or considered wrong. We are told the earth would fade and perish (Ps. 102:24-28; Jas. 1:10, 11).

Where did the Lord place His emphasis? "And fear not them (or that, MK) which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Read the following verses and be encouraged, for He said, "Fear ye not" for God protects the sparrows and has numbered the hairs of your head, "therefore, ye are more valuable than many sparrows" (vs. 29-31).

Question 10 : Was Jesus truly, "The vilest sinner of all time" as some have charged?

Answer : Only representatively!" One is guilty of sin when "he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed" (James 1:14). He bore our sins, having our sins laid upon him as the only means for removal (scapegoat) of those sins. Different writers and even recent movies would like to make Christ guilty of every sin that man has committed. Humanism is at the heart of such endeavor. If the deity of Christ can be destroyed, then He is without authority to speak to our sins and unqualified to be our savior. . . humanizing of Christ.

Christ was made a "curse" for us (Gal. 3:13), knowing no sin was said to have been made "to be sin for us." This is what

the word "propitiation" means, "in our place" or "instead of" me (2 Cor. 5:21). God did not put Christ under a "curse" nor ever look upon Him with displeasure or disdain. Examine Hebrews chapter 1 as God eulogizes Christ and His redemptive action. He was made a curse in that He was hanged upon the tree (Gal. 3:13). Those who were hanged were thought to have been the vilest of mankind and spoken of in the Old Testament as "sin worthy of death" (Deut. 21:13, 22).

Jesus was harmless and guiltless as was affirmed by Peter in that He "did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22). A guilty person is one who deserves punishment for having violated law to which he is answerable. Christ was guilty of the violation of none of God's laws. He was treated as one as if He were guilty; gladly bearing our guilt. He took it patiently, serving as our atonement for sins for He was guiltless (I Pet. 2:20).

Christ became, in an Old Testament expression, a "sin-offering." Offerings were made for the sin of the people in the form of burnt offerings or sacrifices and the people, the real sinners, consumed the sacrificial meat offerings. Jesus was an anti-type of those offerings. Being our sacrifice, He became our sin-offering. God allowed Jesus to suffer as if He were guilty, though innocent. Christ was never guilty of sin or charged by God as having committed sin. For us to do so would cause us to be grossly guilty of blasphemy.

Question 11 : "How does someone join the church of Christ?"

Answer : When one becomes a part of the New Testament Church he leaves his old state and enters into a new relationship with God. This relationship is sometimes pictured as an entrance "into Christ". Since the church is the (spiritual)

body of Christ (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18), when one enters into Christ he enters into Christ's church, kingdom, or His body.

A number of figures are used to represent the change that takes place in an individual's life as he moves from the state of sin and enters into this new relationship. Such expressions as "conversion," "new birth," "regeneration," "reconciliation," "redemption," are used.

Therefore, the entrance into the body of Christ differs completely from entrance into any sort of human organization. No such change takes place in an individual when he joins a lodge, a sectarian body, or any sort of human society. We can only become united with Christ, or His church (His spiritual body), by experiencing a complete change in our nature. We must die to the old life and be raised to a new life with Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).

Jesus stated that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). In another place he instructed that "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3). Peter said, "Repent. . . and be converted that your sins be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Paul declared that God "saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). It becomes obvious that the efforts of both God and man are necessary for entrance into the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).

Question 12 : "How does someone join the church of Christ?"
(Continued)

Answer : The New Testament specifically stipulates four separate steps, or acts which culminate in a complete change of heart, life, or relation and by which one is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, the

kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13).

Man must **believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "... if you believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24), and, "... he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). Paul also taught of its necessity for the Philippian jailer to have salvation (Acts 16:32). Belief implies complete trust in Christ--not self, nor anyone else.

Man must **repent** of his sins. Repent or perish seems to be the option of Lk. 13:3, 5. The Holy Spirit directed Peter to command repentance "for the remission of sins" or "that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 2:38, 3:19). Repentance means a complete change, where one dies to the practice of sin and brings his life into harmony with the life of Jesus.

One must **confess** the name of Christ. We do not confess our belief or confidence in some human creed, but acknowledge our faith in Christ as the Son of God, which is evidenced in Matt. 10:32, 33; Lk. 9:26; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9, 10.

One must be **baptized** into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). Jesus intended that this be a part of the Great Commission, (Mk. 16:16). On Pentecost, Peter commanded them to "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" (Acts 2:38). Saul was told by Ananias to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). In simple, they nor we can "join" the church. By doing the aforementioned, they became acceptable candidates for salvation and "the Lord added them to His church" (Acts 2:47), making them new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

Question 13 : "I'd like for you to explain Matthew 12 and Mark 3 on Blasphemy. I would like to know, is blasphemy

spoken, thought, or what?

Answer : The passages in question are Matt. 12:27-31 and Mk. 3:28-29. In simple, the instruction was, if one had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, he could have forgiveness, although he could for "every sin and blasphemy." The question is, "Why is this so serious?"

As Jesus prepared to leave His followers, He admonished them not to be guilty of this wrong. He said that they could speak against Him or men while on the earth and receive forgiveness. When He had departed and sent the Holy Spirit, which would perfect their testimony and guide them into all truth, serving as a messenger of the will of God, there would be no further means of removing sin or finding forgiveness. "Blasphemy, is injurious and malicious speaking against God or his attributes; to blaspheme in the scriptural sense denotes improper and unworthy speeches against God, his attributes, works, or temple; it means to ascribe to God the weaknesses of men, or to attribute to men the perfections and works of God."

The power of the Holy Spirit was made available miraculously, prior to the accumulation of the complete revealed word of God, the Bible (I Cor. 13:10; Jas. 1:25), to assist people in believing in Jesus (Jn. 20:30, 31). "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The word of God was made possible by God through inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We are "saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8). When denying or refusing the powerful message of the Holy Spirit, we reject the gospel message of salvation which He was to bring, thus severing the spiritual umbilical cord to everlasting life. Denial of the power of the living God manifested through His Holy Spirit is damnable whether spoken or thought (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:8, 9; Rev. 22:18, 19).

Question 14 : Please explain the significance of the story of the Prodigal Son of Luke 15:11-32.

Answer : This story is often referred to as the “Parable of the Prodigal Son,” depicting God as the God of the lost, as well as a God of love. A parable is laying the unfamiliar along side the familiar to allow comparison to be made. Another meaning, “An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

In this parable, a young son is determined to leave home, exerting his self-will. He craved freedom without restraint. In leaving home, he left his father (God). Home would not be home to a boy of alien will, so, his father made no attempt to hold him. The son journeyed to a “far country” to be as distant to restraint as possible, to live in unfettered joy. His “Aversion of desire soon became apostasy of conduct.” He forgot that physical freedom always has its limits (Mt. 6:27). The son could represent any of us who “demands his rights” to the abuse of others or a denial of God’s rights. “God hath determined the bounds of our habitation” (Acts 17:26) and placed limits upon His people, beyond which they dare not tread (Jn. 14:6; Matt. 7:21)!

His apostasy of conduct turned into spendthrift folly. His judgment was impaired and “He wasted his substance.” At one point in time he possessed much, the next, “He began to be in want.” So it is with us when we seek for fulfillment in “all the wrong places.” When we are abiding by the Father all our needs are met (Ps. 23) and all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3; Matt. 6:33).

In his “far away” condition, he “was sent” to feed the swine (v. 15). He had entered into servitude and his independence dissipated. After his so called “friends” had taken all he had, they forsook him “And no man gave unto him.” Spiritual death means “separation,” and indeed he had been, from his father, family, and now those thought to be

friends. His awareness of self and condition is likened unto repentance. God loves and provides for us. We destroy self and God's real purpose for us when we rebel against His will and remain lost in sin. Prodigal, it would be smart to return home!

Question 15 : "What is meant by the phrase "church in the wilderness" mentioned in Acts 7:38?"

Answer : We usually hear the word "church" used only in context with the New Testament. To my knowledge, this is the only place it appears in the N.T. in association with an Old Testament event. There is not a discrepancy to be found in this passage.

In this passage, Luke is making reference to the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses. They were an enslaved people while in Egypt (Deut. 26:6), but delivered by Moses from the Red Sea and escaping the hand of Pharaoh (Ex. 15:22). The bondage of Egypt, oppressive hand of Pharaoh, deliverance through the Red Sea, wandering in the wilderness, and final arrival in Canaan is typical of the deliverance of mankind today from enslavement of sin and the hand of Satan, saved in the waters of baptism (I Cor. 10:2; I Pet. 3:21) to live a life of obstacles, finally arriving in the eternal "promised land" if remaining faithful while "wandering."

To this point our discussion may appear a bit "disjointed," but not necessarily so! The word "church" is translated in the Hebrew word "gahal" or "assembly." There is nothing particularly religious about the word "church" other than the use of it in the New Testament in making reference to the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23, 27). In the Old Testament, the Israelites were referred to in the passage in

query as the “old assembly” of God’s people, while those who are members of the body of Christ today make up the “new assembly.” The Greek word “ekklesia” meaning, “that which is called out” gives some additional meaning. The Israelites were “called out” of Egypt and the bondage under which they were suffering into a quest for the “promised land” under the mediatorship of Moses. The Lord’s church is God’s assembled today in quest of heaven under the mediatorship of Christ (I Tim. 2:5). God has been with both of these “assemblies,” speaking to their needs, though dealing with them according to a different economy.

Question 16 : “What actually makes a person repent?”

Answer : There is nothing that can “make a person repent!” Repentance is a turning from sin after a renouncing of it and allowing its captive clutch to be released. It is by one’s own lust and desire that he was drawn away from God initially (James 1:14, 15), and it must be by man’s own will and desire that he turn from that which drew him away (James 4:7, 8). We often receive questions about repentance, because it is truly the turning point in a person’s life from unacceptable living to that which becomes godliness.

The scriptures plainly teach the necessity of repentance (Lk. 13:1-5; Acts 26:20; Acts 17:30) by all who would expect to inhabit heaven and be freed from the enslavement of sin.

Please understand that repentance is more than a confession of wrong. If one genuinely repents, he will confess his wrongs, but one may confess his wrong and yet continue to do wrong. James 2:19-27 speaks of the man who sees and knows, but makes no effort to correct his behavior. In verse 18, this man is likened unto the devils who believe to the point of trembling, but there is not a hint of approval. Based on this

reality, conviction alone is not a synonym for repentance. We can be convinced of wrong yet not repent. We must see repentance as more than a new life. A new life naturally flows from repentance, but it is not repentance. Godly sorrow is often misunderstood as repentance. The Bible says that Godly sorrow is responsible for leading one to repentance or "works repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10), after proper conditioning (Rom. 1:16). Don't confuse as being identical with repentance.

Repentance is a **turning from sin!** Jesus says that the men of Nineveh repented (Lk. 11:32). The author of the book of Jonah says they turned from their evil way, therefore, righteousness was reckoned unto them for they had truly repented (Jonah 3:10). The motivation for repentance then and now should be: first, the fear of being lost and eternally punished (Lk. 13:1-5), secondly, the impressive and overwhelming goodness of God (Rom. 2:4), if we have not, or cannot be moved by either, we are to be pitied!

Question 17 : "How can I reconcile Christmas, Santa Clause, and the Bible?"

Answer : At this time of the year, many questions are asked by concerned, Bible believing people about this subject. A simple answer to the question is that, you can't! We have emphasized in Bible Talk from its beginning to "speak where the Bible speaks, remain silent where it is silent," and "do Bible things by Bible authority and in Bible ways."

No authority or permission to hallow a day that the Lord has not hallowed, to reverence a man (St. Nickolas) that the Bible has not revered, and to create a secular holiday attaching religious connotation. In all honesty, I can not give you a Bible answer for Christmas, but numerous scriptures being violated by hallowing and attaching religious significance

to a carnal, pagan, and merely traditional holiday.

The burden of proof is not mine, but those who practice, with religious connotation, Christmas. The Bible emphasizes that Christianity is not seasonal (2 Tim. 4:2), but that our entire life is a continual offering of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1,2). Too, everything that the Christian does is to be done "in the name of," meaning "by the authority of" the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17). *Facts* which are vital to our salvation are recorded in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), but not even a hint of the date of the birth of Christ has ever appeared in holy writ. "Santa Clause," a Roman Catholic bishop of the 5th century, bishop of Myra was originally honored by the Greeks and Latins. (Ency. Britannica, Vol. 19, pages 648-9). Most of the relics of Christmas tradition, such as the holly wreath, mistletoe, Yule log, and tree decorating are of pre-Christian times and are from paganism, much from ancient Egypt (F.J. Haskins, *Answers to Questions*). Much of the above mentioned celebration devices are originally in recognition of the death of the "old sun" and the birth of the new at the winter solstice (Schaff-Herzog Ency.). In response to Col. 3:17 and 2 John 9, I can not conscientiously reconcile the two. I can with good conscience observe Christ's *death* every Lord's day to extol honor. (Acts 2:42, 20:7).

Question 18 : "Does each individual not have the right to his own belief?"

Answer : Yes, if he is not real selective about where he spends his eternal destination! One of the most important things in religion is to be self-surrendered and submissive to God's will. We should strive to please God in all things as did Jesus (Jn. 8:29; Heb. 5:8, 9). It is not "he that commendeth himself . . . approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:18). The only way that we can know the will of the Lord is through

His word, the Bible (2 Thess. 2:12, 13; Jn. 8:32). It must be studied and obeyed (2 Tim. 2:15, 16; I Pet. 1:22).

One has but to look at the examples given in the Bible to understand the thinking of God and how He warns against following our own instincts and wishes (Rom. 15:4). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35), demanding and expecting our lives to be lived according to faith (Heb. 11:4), for if it is not by faith, it is sin (Rom. 14:23). This faith of which we speak is that which comes from God's word, not from man's own intellect, feelings or biased opinions, regardless of how sincere one might be. Cain is a good case in point to demonstrate God's disfavor with religious improvisations (Gen. 4:3-5). Naaman, of 2 Kings 5:1-14, a leprous man could find healing only according to God's way, though he suggested some ways of his own. Though Saul of Tarsus (Paul) performed his duties with a good conscience, he made havock of the church (Acts 26:9, 10; 23:1). When he submitted obediently to the Lord's will, he found release from his guilt (Acts 22:16).

Christ having all authority, has the right to our belief (Matt. 28:18). If every person has the right to his own belief, God's will would be ruled out and terms for pardon laid down by Christ ignored. We must subscribe to the true gospel (Gal. 1:8), avoiding beliefs and teachings of different doctrines (I Tim. 1:13). We are to hold to sound words and speak that which befits sound doctrine (2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 2:1). Dear reader, please examine what you believe and practice. Can you validate and justify it by God's word or do you have to appeal to "I believe" for convictional foundation?

Question 19 : "Do you think that it is possible that the religiously divided world can ever be united?"

Answer : I am glad that you care! The question would be

better stated if we asked, "is it probable?" Certainly, it is possible! This is no new problem! Jesus prayed that His followers might enjoy a oneness that He shared with His heavenly Father (John 17:11-23). The apostles were all under the same commission to preach everywhere the same gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). They were to be one, not in person, but in name, faith, doctrine, practice, fellowship, etc. Jesus has been accused of praying an impossible prayer and argue the impossibility of such happening. If it is truly impossible for all to "see alike" and be one religiously, Jesus could not have prayed in faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). No one in their right mind could say that Jesus was not pleasing to His Father, because He was in every way (John 8:29). Jesus was praying for a reality.

We should never be guilty of thanking the Lord for the diversity in religion, for someone has to be wrong for there to be the difference. Jesus expressed His reasoning as to the need for unity, so "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17:21). Having "choices" that do not square with the "Lord's choice" is what is responsible for religious division and infidelity. "Attending the church of your choice" is not a biblical concept, but rather contrary to the total intent of Christianity and Christ's prayer! The kingdom (church) divided against itself cannot stand (Mk. 3:24). The Kingdom of Christ cannot consist of all religious denominations or views; if so, it cannot stand. Daniel said, "It shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). Unity is good and pleasant (Ps. 133:1). God's will cannot be compromised (Rev. 22:18, 19)! The inspired apostle Paul, required unity among believers (I Cor. 1:10-13). He instructed all hearers and readers to refuse names, doctrines, and teachings of men. Unity can only be realized when "walking in the light" (I Jn. 1:7-9), embracing nothing but the simple, God given, inspired word--the Bible which saves when obeyed (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)!

Question 20 : “When I visit a church of Christ, what can I expect to find? Will I be embarrassed in any way?”

Answer : Your question is fair and you should know what to expect. In every way, we would like for you to feel and experience what a worship service might have been like in the 1st century. Some of our customs, language and dress will be different, but when it comes to the worship and message preached, it should be the same as that of almost 2,000 years ago. No, indeed, you will not be embarrassed!

Let me explain what you can expect and why. You can expect **friendliness**. It will not be artificial, but warm and genuine love and friendship will prevail (Matt. 22:36-40) with a desire to be your friend (Prov. 18:24). You can expect our service to be with **reverence** and **order** (I Cor. 14:40). We make every effort to avoid extremism, both ritualism and emotionalism. You will find our worship to be spiritual, reverent and orderly. You can expect our worship to be **simple**. The worship authorized in the New Testament, nothing more or less. It will be spiritual and according to truth (Jn. 4:23, 24). This simplicity makes it unique and special! You can plan to participate in congregational **singing** without the aid of instruments (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). You will find it clean and pretty. You will have the privilege of **giving** as God has prospered you on the Lord's day (I Cor. 16:1, 2) evidencing your devotion to God (2 Cor. 8:1-8). This condition of heart will determine the amount given, above all, it must be a free-will offering (2 Cor. 9:6-7). We are a people believing strongly in **prayer** (I Tim. 2:8-13). When assembling for worship, prayers are offered frequently. The **Lord's supper** will be offered on the first day of every week (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7) for those who are faithful children of God (I Jn. 1:5-7; Gal. 3:26, 27). You can expect Christ-centered **teaching** from classrooms and pulpit (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). You will have a

chance at the close of the sermon to become a Christian according to the scriptures if desires (Jn. 8:24; Lk. 13:3; Matt. 10:32; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26, 27) upon letting your request be known (Acts 16:30-33). We welcome you to visit a church of Christ near you.

Question 21 : “How can parents best help their children to love and worship God?”

Answer : Many parents are failing in their duty to help their children by not being willing to take the time, put forth effort and make the necessary sacrifices. Play and entertainment have replaced a responsible attitude in the lives of parents, causing them to be lazy or neglectful in executing training procedures for their children. Having the reproductive power is a glorious gift (Gen. 1:27, 28) but does not automatically make good parents or insure good children.

God is the ultimate in love and authority (I Jn. 4:8; Ps. 47::2, 83:18; 115:3). Parents must first be willing, therefore, to respond to God’s love and commandments in their own lives before they can help their children to do so.

A proper standard to guide the home must be established (Rom. 13:1; 2 Tim. 3:15; Jas. 1:25; Deut. 6:6,7; Prov. 22:6). When parents live by and honor the standard, their children will be more apt to do so as well. Parents must train, nurture, and admonish their children by the infallible standard, God’s word (Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Eph. 6:4; I Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Does the child see parents studying the Bible, demonstrating respect and honoring laws? Do our children know the joy of parents talking with them about what it teaches?

Children must be taught to respect authority! This process begins with children learning to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). Nothing is more unbecoming and sinful than

children left to their own way. The child not taught to obey his parents will be a problem in every facet of society. Parents are to see their children comply with correct rules and principles. Training has not taken place unless children are caused to submit to parental authority (I Sam. 3:13; Gen. 18:10; Josh. 24:15). Authority can only be respected and responded to when discipline is exercised, both instructive and corrective. Chastisement is explicitly taught in the Bible (I Sam. 7:14; Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:13-15; 29:15; Heb. 12:6, 7) to be studied and obeyed! Parents, show them the way to respecting and loving God by a demonstration of your love and worship for Him.

Question 22 : “Does God require us to be circumcised today?”

Answer : No. In more recent years it has been performed more for hygienic reasons than spiritual. It was, and is, the practice of removing the foreskin (prepuce) of the male, more literally meant, “to cut around.”

This procedure was performed on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12, 13; Lev. 12:3; Phil. 3:5) due to blood-clotting facilitation, it being the best at that age, and was a seal of righteousness (Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11) and seems to indicate, from the Genesis passage just cited, that it is a sign of possession. This rite was originally instituted as a designation for the Jews (Acts 10:45; Gal. 2:9) and those converted to the Jewish religion, observed on the Sabbath (John 7:23) which was a pre-requisite for the privileges of the passover (Ex. 12:48). The male child usually received his name at the same time (Gen. 21:3, 4; Lk. 1:59; 2:21). Covenant promises were given to those having been circumcised (Gen. 17:4-14; Gal. 5:3; Rom. 3:1; 4:11; 9:7-13). The Judaizing Christians (advocates of Moses' law) falsely taught that it was necessary in the early church, refuted by

Paul (Rom. 2:25-28; Gal. 6:13) and referred to as a “yoke” (Acts 15:10). The scriptures clearly indicate that the requirement was abrogated, or done away with (Acts 15:5-29; Gal. 2:3, 4; 5:2-11).

Though circumcision is not binding today as a religious rite, its significance is great. A more poignant usage was made in Deut. 10:16 than what we have yet seen as Israel was charged to “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked,” and again in 30:6, “God will circumcise thy heart.” Note also: Jer. 4:4; 6:10; 9:26. The application is that “Jesus hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). “We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:3ff). We are “circumcised without hands, in putting off the body of sins. . . by Christ. . . by being buried with him in baptism. . . risen with him through faith. . . dead in sins . . . having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:11-14; 3:11).

Question 23 : “We know from the scriptures that those who reject Jesus as their personal Saviour will spend eternity in Hell. Are there any other reasons one might go?”

Answer : My commendations to the querist for this question and the sweet spirit with which it was asked. Too, thank you for requesting that scriptures be quoted. There is no other way to answer a Bible question correctly.

Yes, there are other reasons for a person being lost. Paul taught through inspiration that, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). He also instructed that, “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). That which is done without authority from God’s word is sin. Please note as well, that there are two avenues of committing sin:

Commission -- sinning by doing that which has been forbidden (I Cor. 6:9, 10), Omission -- Leaving out, refusing, or failing to do that which should have been done (James 1:27; Mk. 16:16). So then, sin does not always require a flagrant committal of wrong, but often an indifference and obliviousness to right. The Psalmist stated that God "hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5).

Sin is committed when one is drawn away from right to participate in that which is evil due to one's satisfying his own appetites and lust (James 1:13-15). The sinful inclinations are of the devil (I Jn. 3:4) and attributed to unrighteousness, that being, living in the state of being "unright" in God's sight (I Jn. 5:17). Those who do so, even though they have "accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour," "crucify. . . the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6). These people had been "once enlightened. . . tasted of the heavenly gift. . . partakers of the Holy Ghost. . . tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come" (vs. 4, 5), another way of saying that they were Christians. He is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:9). Keep in mind, we must not only say "Lord, Lord," but "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" or hear Him say, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23). Please consider; Col. 2:4-9; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 5:18-20.

Question 24 : "Is there anything one may commit sinfully besides blasphemy, for which they could not be forgiven? I mean if one repents of any sin, thought, action or deed, will the Lord forgive them?"

Answer : God is the only one who can forgive sins (Mk. 2:7). The scriptures give us some insight regarding this question and I do feel comfortable speaking where the Bible speaks.

In the same context of the blasphemy mentioned in your

question it also mentioned that “*all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men*” (Matt. 12:31). The key is, as you have so keenly observed, repentance. The only way that a person can truly become “dead to sin” (Rom. 6:7) is to be sorry to God for the wrong so strongly that it would cause one to literally stop doing the sin (2 Cor. 7:10). . . then we become “dead” or “separated” to that sin. A difficult passage and concept, of which we have spoken previously in Bible Talk, is presented in Rom. 6:16, where the “sin unto death” is mentioned. Many feel, which I concur has merit, that it is referring to a sin which is continued to be committed unto the death of the one guilty. In this case there would be no remorse, “godly sorrow,” or chance for repenting. Some Bible scholars place suicide in this category because of death occurring as a result of the sin. There is always the possibility of dying instantly or abruptly of heart attack, auto accident, etc., with unresolved transgressions. Yes, even murder can be forgiven! We know that Saul (Paul) consented to the death of Stephen (Acts. 8:58, 8:1). The Corinthians were guilty of this sin and more (I Cor. 6:9f). Adultery can be forgiven but proves to be one of the most difficult because of having to give up the adulterous partner or continue to keep the sin alive (Mt. 5 27, 32; 19:9; Jas. 2:11, etc.). Sin can only be corrected by the discontinuance of it, not merely saying, “I’m sorry!” We have consolation in knowing that, “There hath no temptation taken you. . . but will with the temptation also **make a way of escape**, that ye may be able to bear it” (I Cor. 10:13). We must repent and contact the blood of Christ to be forgiven (Rom. 6:1-6; Eph. 1:7; I Pet. 1:18-23).

Question 25 : What is meant by the statement “the last state is worse with them than the first”?

Answer : The statement to which reference is being made is

found in 2 Pet. 2:20, 21. No doubt Peter's betrayal of the Lord still loomed in his memory though this message is being written several years later.

It seems as if the people to whom he is writing had been taught and had obeyed the gospel (became Christians) but had become unfaithful, or returned to their former lifestyle. In order for a person to experience a "taste of heaven on earth" and return to a form of "hell on earth," something has become warped in their value system to the point that their heart has been permanently affected. Luke stated that "no man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Lk. 9:62). Peter also said that some false teachers had "forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor" (2 Pet. 2:15). It takes even greater estrangement from God to teach or become militant regarding wayward living. They were called ". . . wells without water, clouds that are carried with the tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever" (vs. 17).

John Calvin's teaching of "Impossibility of apostasy" or "once saved always saved" can only be reckoned as false teaching in the light of the above passages. The term "fallen from grace" actually appears in Gal. 5:4, making reference to those who had returned to former, erroneous beliefs. They had been purged of that which was sour or repulsive (to God) but had returned as the dog to his vomit and sow to her wallow of mire and slime (2 Pet. 2:22). They had a knowledge of Christ. Same word "knowledge" is used here as in Phil. 3:10, referring to those who knew Christ, power of resurrection, fellowshiped in suffering and conformed unto His death. It is worse because they knowingly, willfully turned from the truth (James 4:17). They would have been better off had they never known it than to so maliciously mistreat it (Heb. 10:25ff). This implies greater degree of punishment as is being implied in James 3:1.

Question 26 : What does the word “faithful” mean?

Answer : The word is traditionally used in a multiplicity of ways. In English it suggests being “full of faith”. It is used more commonly to denote continuation in faith through a period of time. It is usually used as “trustworthy” or “dependable”, but also carries with it the idea of “continuing to be a believer.”

Jesus identified himself to John as “the faithful witness” (Rev. 1:5), and to the church at Laodicea as “the faithful and true witness” (3:14). Anitpas was a “faithful witness” and willing to die, thus allowed to “eat of the tree of life” (Rev. 2:7).

His words are faithful. “These sayings are faithful and true” (Rev. 22:6). They could only be faithful (to God) by being true. They were therefore trustworthy and dependable. This must be an inseparable connection between any man and his word. Jesus’ word is faithful because he is faithful. An errant Bible could not be the word of the Lord for the Lord cannot give an unfaithful word. His warnings, therefore, must be headed and promises acknowledged. “And he that sat on the throne said, . . . write, for these words are true and faithful” (Rev. 21:5).

His people are faithful. God is “Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14). We cannot be “with Him,” without being “faithful”. His faithfulness calls us to faithfulness. Throughout His ordeal of sufferings, rejection, false accusations, being reviled, put to death and doubted by men the world over, He is still faithful! Our faithfulness will not be in vain, because He is faithful. The “faithful and true witness,” whose “words are true and faithful,” has promised us if we would, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). We have received instruction to,

“be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of Lord” for your efforts are “not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). You are hearing a description of what it means to be “faithful.”

Question 27 : “From where did the different races of people originate?”

Answer : We must look both to the history of early civilizations as well as Bible history to track the different peoples of the earth. It is believed that the highlands of Armenia was the central spot from which the migration of the people after the deliverance from the flood via the ark began. This spot was equidistant from the main bodies of water where these earliest settlements were established.

Genesis 10 gives the repopulation by Ham, Shem and Japheth who were the sons of Noah. The geographical explanations of the nations are found in 10:5, 10-12, 19, 30 and allusions are made to the nations in the prophetic and historical books of the Old Testament as well.

The territory of **Japheth** was located on the coasts of the Mediterranean, north into Europe and Asia Minor and east beyond the Tigris and Euphrates to India. This territory embraces the Indo-European family of languages made up chiefly of the Cimmerians, Scythians, Medes, Greeks, Tabali, Mushki, Thracians. The territory of **Shem** (Semites) occupied the south-western corner of Asia including the peninsula of Arabia. The Elamites, Assyrians, Chaldeans (both Jews and Arabs), Lydians of Asia Minor and Arameans of Syria. **Ham** (Hamites) is more difficult to pin-point, but for the most part settled in Africa and are found mingled among the Semitic races on the shores of Arabia, and on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, extending to Palestine on the north. They were also

scattered to the larger islands, as Crete and Cyprus in the Mediterranean. From Cush came the Ethiopians having associations in Babylonia, Ethiopia and to the south of Egypt, Mizraim produced the Egyptians, Phut (Put) the Libyians and of Canaan came the Palestinians (Canaanites).

Primarily, we Americans and the white race sprang from Japheth as well as the Europeans; the Greeks, Asiatic and those of the Arabian territory and easterners from Shem; the black nations, as Egyptians, Africans, etc., came from Ham.

Question 28 : “How did we get the Bible and how can we be sure that it is accurate?”

Answer : Your question is very legitimate! Our creed (creedo) is actually defined as, “that which I believe.” Not just any kind of belief or creed will do if we are serious about reaching Heaven and seeing God. The Bible is God’s word, given to man by Him for our guidance, encouragement and if necessary, reprimand (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 4:1-6). The Bible contains some of the words of the Devil (Gen. 3:1-5), yet, only revelation reveals the divine (Deut. 29:29).

The Old Testament was written as the Prophets were moved by the Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:21). Isaiah stated that Jehovah hath spoken (1:2), leaving the implication that nothing more was to be said. “The word of Jehovah came”, said Jeremiah (1:1, 2), and Ezekiel said that the, “Word of Jehovah came expressly” (1:3) with God’s Spirit to instruct them (Neh. 9:20). The Old Testament is ascribed to Moses in that the “Law came by him” (Jn. 1:17; Lk. 2:22) while possessing the Spirit as none other (Nu. 11:17, 25). David, as well, wrote by inspiration (God breathed), just as the “Holy Ghost saith” (Heb. 3:7-11; Ps. 95:7). The Old Testament prophecies are New Testament witnesses. The Holy Spirit gave witness (Heb.

10:15-17; Jer. 31:31) and instructs that there have been three divisions of prophecy through the years (Lk. 24:44).

The New Testament was given by God as He "speaks in these last days" (Heb. 1:1, 2). Christ speaks through the apostles, commanding they be heard (Jn. 13:20), for through their words belief would come (Jn. 17:20) because they had been given God's word (Jn. 17:8). The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles (Jn. 14:26; 16:13) by whom also they spake (Acts 2:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:3). They were ambassadors for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:18-20), commissioned to teach all things (Matt. 28:20), God confirming those words with signs which followed (Heb. 2:3, 4; Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12). The apostles' words were final which were not to be changed (Gal. 1:6-9). They had been once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Dear friend, I recommend God's word to you as being adequate then, now and until the end of time!

Question 29 : "What do you think God is like?"

Answer : Volumes could be written in response to this question and still not answer or exhaust all the possibilities. You are to be commended for your wonder and concern. There were those in Acts 17:22, 23 who acknowledged an "unknown god" whom they ignorantly worshipped. Life eternal depends upon our knowing God (Jn. 17:3) and our escaping wrath to come (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). Solomon had the right idea when saying, "We know God and serve Him with a willing mind" (1 Chron. 28:9).

There are many misconceptions about God. The Bible plainly states that God is not like man (Ps. 50:21; Acts 17:29-30), having "not flesh and blood" but is a spirit (Jn. 4:24). Man hides from man (Gen. 3:8), deceiving each other (Acts 5:1-10), being slack in our promises (2 Pet. 3:9), respecting persons,

and judging by appearance while God looks on the heart (I Sam. 16:7). Man bribes man and shares a more liberal attitude toward sin than what God seems to maintain. Man proposes a multiplicity of ways to respond and make God happy while God has only one way (Jn. 14:6).

God has two sides, but not two faces! Often one is magnified and the other minimized. Paul makes reference to the goodness **and** severity of God (Rom. 11:22). Some think that God is too good to punish man for sin. Can God be good and let sin go unpunished? Others see God as a monster hiding in the shadows awaiting our misstep or mistake. This is not the God of the Bible (James 1:13).

The goodness of God overwhelms us and makes us wonder about the fact that, "God is mindful of Man" (Ps. 115:12). He is aware of our needs (Jas. 1:17) and cognizant of social concerns, knowing that, "It is not good to be alone", therefore, made man and woman for each other (Gen. 2:18). He has supplied all our spiritual needs (Eph. 1:3) through Christ (I Jn. 15:1-7). He has dealt with our eternal needs (Jn. 14:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:1, 2), made us in His image (Gen. 3:15), given us His Son to redeem us from our sinful condition (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:14-16), given us help in the hour of trial and comfort through every sorrow (2 Cor. 1:3). He is truly worth knowing!

Question 30 : "Does Matthew 15:11 mean an oral utterance of the nature of man's underlying heart's conditions, thoughts and things his heart contains?"

Answer : Yes, in part. The passage in simple states that a man is defiled by what comes out of his mouth and not that which goes in. This same teaching appears in Mark 7:15.

In order to develop a proper appreciation for what this passage is teaching, one had to study the context of the verse.

The scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus, chiding him about the behavior of his disciples for transgressing (violating) the traditions of the elders (Matt. 15:1, 2). they were failing to wash their hands before eating their bread or meal. Mothers, your sons would love to find this passage of scripture! Jesus left the original problem and cited the commandment of the Lord, by the Law, of honoring father and mother and not speaking evil of them (vs. 4) as was taught in scripture (Ex. 20:12; 21:17; Deut. 5:16; Lev. 20:9), imposing the death penalty if violated. The Pharisees interfered with their tradition by saying their portion of their father's estate had been dedicated to God (had become Corban), freeing them from any responsibility of caring for their parents. It seems as if they were to utilize the estate gift to provide for them till their death. Jesus is saying that they were defiled by their defraudulant lies about their estate, in so doing, they showed that they were guilty in violating their own tradition and were "without a leg to stand on!"

Jesus told them they were "without understanding" (vs. 18) nor perceived, that what comes out of the man defiles him because it comes from the heart (Matt. 12:34; 15:18, 19). Eating with dirty hands goes into the belly defiling it, but it can be purged as draught by vomiting or defecation (vss. 19-20). The real defilers are as follows: evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil (envious) eye, false witness, railings, pride and foolishness (vss. 21-22). These are evil and defile a person for they proceed from within, indicating a soiled heart (Matt. 15:18, 20).

Question 31 : "How widely must my sins be acknowledged?"

Answer : Every known sin must be confessed to God. Any and

every sin unrepented of creates a barrier between God and the sinner (Ps. 66:18). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9). The above passage impresses upon us the necessity of a penitent heart from whence comes confessions, then forgiveness.

The question seems to be concerned with confessing to or before others. James taught that we (Christians) are to "confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). The healing spoken of is forgiveness of sins. Through confessing our faults to each other, we can pray for each other for strength and forgiveness from God. We are encouraged to pray for our brethren in regards to sins which are "not unto death" (I Jn. 5:16, 17). Those sins being ones not repented of, or overriding the very desires of the sinner, beseeching God to forgive in spite of his refusal to repent.

James 5:16 implies that we "keep on confessing our sins one to the other and keep on praying one for another. "We have no Bible precedence for confessing to a stipulated person such as an elder or preacher or "confessionals" where wholesale confessions are made, but to each other. I do not find it in the best interest of any of the parties involved to confess that which is between the sinner and God alone. Private thoughts involve God and self. It has been observed that the confession should be as private as the nature of the sin. If it involves one other person, go to that one (Matt. 18:15) alone. If it involves more than one, make it right with them, or if the church, take it before the body (Matt. 18:17). Right the wrong with those who have been wronged! We sometimes open ourselves up for more gossip than needed by broadcasting our feelings or thoughts before those to whom it does not pertain. If you and God can work it out and peace be made, do so; if not, make your confession as broad as needed,

to allow those affected knowledge of your sorrow.

Question 32 : "Does it really matter what I believe?"

Answer : Yes. Every aspect of life requires some specifics about which we must be particular. When eternal life is involved, it seems as if even more concentration should be placed on the specifics! Many people say, "I believe in God, "but refuse to obey His commandments (I Jn. 5:3). Jesus required of those who loved Him, obedience (Jn. 14:15). There were those who did not serve nor glorify Him (Jn. 17:4; Eph. 3:21). They too are not leading others to Him (Mk. 16:15-16). The one talent man said that he knew the Lord, yet he hid his talent in the earth (Matt. 25:24), who later paid dearly for his refusal to use his talent (Matt. 25:30).

Others say that, "I live a good moral life." The rich young ruler did as well, but note, he ran to Jesus and kneeled to Him and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him if he knew the commandments (Old Testament Law). He said, "All these have I observed from my youth." Then Jesus loved him and said, "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" (Mk. 10:17-22). He refused to obey the Lord for he had great possessions. There are those who say, "I can keep the Ten Commandments," but refuse to obey the great commission (Lk. 24:46, 47; Mk. 16:15, 16) or God's plan for salvation. Commitment to truth is required to be saved.

Still others say, "I can't make any sense out of the Bible." The Bible was written on a sixth-grade level for adult people. We seem to understand everything else we choose to read, why not the Bible? The Ethiopian Nobleman did not

understand what he was reading from Isaiah 53, yet Philip helped him and he readily understood and obeyed (Acts 8:30-38; Eph. 5:17). We need to develop the disposition which Samuel possessed, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:9-10). Are you being led by prejudicial thinking of men or God's word? By which shall ye be judged?

Question 33 : "Can you help me to understand more fully what it means to reverence God."

Answer : Thank God that there are people who have that desire! We are living in what has become somewhat a godless age with greivous and evil deeds being done. This is a commentary on the fact that we have lost our reverence for God and His word! This was true during the first century and was combated then as we must today. The only restraining influence we have for sin is an awesome reverence for God which provides reason for living right. God is to "be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Ps. 89:7). The writer of Hebrews (12:28) tells us that if our service to God is acceptable, it must be in "reverence and godly fear."

We ask, "Why reverence God?" We are his children by creation (Gen. 1:26; 2:7; Zech. 12:1). We are his offspring (Acts. 17:28, 29), making Him the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9). To ignore this beautiful relationship is to be irreverent! God is our spiritual Father, we His children, who deserves our reverence. We become a part of His family by means of the "new birth" (Jn. 3:3-5; I Pet. 1:22-23). It is, therefore, a privilege to cry out, "Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6). God should be revered because He is our law-giver, ruler, and master. When recognizing our position as servants, it becomes easier to recognize God for who He is. To reject the law of Christ is to reject God (Lk. 10:16; Mt. 10:40).

When "entering the presence of God" reverence should be exercised. Moses took off his shoes when standing on "holy ground" (Ex. 3:5, 6). When we enter into worship, the time for foolishness and levity must end! Solomon advised those who worshipped in his day to "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear" (Ecc. 5:1). In actuality, all that we do ought to demonstrate our reverence to God (Col. 3:23). Whether in thought, language or deed, do it with reverence. We should strive to stand in humble awe of God's word (Ps. 119:161), regarding it as sacred. If we cannot reverence and esteem God here, what makes us think we can be happy in heaven where God is revered? (Rev. 4:8; 5:8)

Question 34 : "Is hatred always wrong?"

Answer : No. Hatred normally has a bad connotation in the minds of most. This, no doubt, is due to the numerous passages in the Bible forbidding such. Never would I permit where God forbids!

The term is used in two different ways in the scriptures, one having more vehemence than the other. Hate was spoken of in Luke 14:26, as "loving less" when the Lord taught that He could not be served properly by man unless he "hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and yea, and his own life also." Yet in I John 3:15 a man is called a murderer if he "hateth his brother." There is not a contradiction here, but a different use of the term. The Lord actually "loves those who hate evil" (Ps. 97:10). One can continue to read from the same source, the Psalms, and find God's joy in those who hate evil (Ps. 101:3; 119:104, 128, 163; 139:21, 22). Hate that others display toward us is bad for them but a blessing for the faithful when endured (Matt. 10:22; Jn. 15:18-25; 17:14).

Hatred becomes a problem, actually a sin, when it is focused at someone. The Lord shattered tradition by requiring His followers to "love their enemies" as opposed to hating them (Matt. 5:43) and placing judgment upon them proportionate to their forgiveness (absence of hate) of others (Matt. 6:15).

Hatred is considered as a "work of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19, 20) and listed as one of the seven abominations of God within the heart of man. (Prov. 26:24-26). "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12). It is so serious for a brother to hate another, because he is abiding in death (I Jn. 3:10-15). God wonders how a man can love Him whom he cannot see when he can't love man who he can see (I Jn. 4:20). The bottom line is to hate wrong, behavior of some people, those who are enemies of God and His church who teach and live in error. Hate the sin, never the sinner (Heb. 8:12).

Question 35 : Can a Christian person believe in abortion and so-called Christian leaders participate in an abortion right's activist parade?"

Answer : Basically I would respond as I did in Bible Talk, November 9, 1987. We must keep in mind that life is God's gift (Acts 17:25), being the only lifeform made "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26) elevating human life to a plane above all other. This is a declaration that man shares kinship with God. Men, therefore, has always been forbidden the right to kill his fellow human because of this "image of God" (Gen. 9:6). This passage shows the penalty for doing so, to be death.

Jesus taught the sacredness of life and demonstrated the same by the giving of Himself, the best of heaven, to save the inhabitants of the earth (John 3:16; I John 3:16). The command for every creature to hear the gospel and be saved,

affirms His value placed on life (Mk. 16:15-16).

There is no distinction made in the scriptures between prenatal and postnatal life. God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee" (Jer. 1:5). John, the baptizer, leaped in his mother's womb when Mary, the mother of our Lord, greeted Elizabeth (Lk. 1:41). David knew that God had formed his inward parts, "seeing my unformed substance; and in thy book they were written" (Ps. 139:14-16).

Usually, the interests of others are more prominent than the life of the unborn. Does the principle of the Golden Rule not apply here? (Matt. 7:12). Paul warned, "not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you to the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). Selfishness lies at the root of abortion! Selfish indulgence in sexual pleasure with a pregnancy to follow, makes abortion an ungodly effort to avoid embarrassment. Doesn't it stand to reason, that a person that could so disregard the sacredness of life is "without natural affection" (Rom. 1:13) and subject to the judgment of God? (Rom. 1:32). Furthermore, those who bid God-speed or support those who do it, are as guilty as those performing it, whether religious leaders or otherwise! (2 Jn. 9, 10).

Question 36 : "What parts of the New Testament are we to obey now and how does it teach us?"

Answer : The Bible speaks to us through four basic avenues: Direct Command, Principles, Examples and Significance of Silence.

Direct Command -- Jesus carefully taught His apostles to teach Christians "all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Divine guidance of the Holy Spirit was promised them, making available infallible memory of what Christ had taught and would lead them into new truths (Jn.

14:26; 16:13). Throughout the New Testament, we find apostolic commands which are binding on all who are in similar circumstances as the persons to whom those commands were addressed.

Principles -- Not all teaching is in the form of detailed commands, but with principles, just as binding as commands. Jesus advised (Mt. 6:33) that we should seek first His kingdom above everything else. We are urged to "be not conformed to the world" (Rom. 12:2) which must affect our speech, amusements, general outlook on life, etc. Learning the application of these principles is the key. Mere Bible reading does not disclose the full range of application of Bible principles, but by experience are the senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

Examples -- The early Christians were under the immediate supervision of the apostles, acting under their guidance. God himself selected the examples recorded in holy writ, reflecting the will of God. We can read the book of Acts (actions of early Christians) and learn by the pattern (Heb. 8:8-5) how to live, teach, think and obey.

Significance of Silence -- The scriptures are adequate and thorough, providing our every need (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We are to embrace "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Unless God has given authority for a practice, the silence of the New Testament indicates that such is not God's will. This is called the "principle of exclusion." When God's "will" is specified, His "will nots" are also made perfectly clear by virtue of silence!

Question 37 : "Should lotteries be made legal in our State to raise revenues? What does God's word say about gambling?"

Answer : There are many political ramifications regarding this question, but out of respect for the querist, I shall strive to give

as Biblical an answer as possible.

Tertulian wrote about 197-198 AD, "If you say that you are a Christian when you are a dice player, you say what you are not, because you are a partner with the world." Dr. E.E. Blanche, author of *The Mathematics of Gambling*, says, "In the long run, nobody can win but the man who owns the game. The mathematical laws of chance guarantee the operator from 1.5 percent to 90 percent of all money wagered." These are views of men, but what God says is our primary interest.

Gambling is wrong for its own inherent reasons and also because of other evils fostered by it. I have before me three pages of reports of the problems caused by gambling. I submit as evidence to the wrongness of gambling: 1. It violates God's law of labour and earning (Gen. 3:19; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10), causing the gambler to seek to win by chance without earning. 2. It seeks to live entirely off others and is parasitic in nature (Ezek. 22:12, 14a), being based on greed, dishonesty and corruption. 3. Gambling secures money by dishonest means (Jer. 22:13; Rom. 12:17). 4. It cannot be done to the glory of God as required (I Cor. 10:31). 5. It cannot be done in the name (by the authority) of the Lord (Col. 3:17). 6. Gambling is wrong because it hates the light and loves the darkness (John 3:19-21). 7. Gambling violates the principle of love (Matt. 7:12). A gambler may lose his own house tonight and "win his neighbour's house tomorrow night which goes squarely against the grain of the first and second commandments" (Read Matt. 22:36-40). 8. Gambling is wrong because it cannot stand when tested by our Lord's standard, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). I find no place in the life of God fearing people for gambling at any level, and suggest we abstain (I Thess. 5:22)!

Question 38 : What is the unpardonable sin?

Answer : This question has been previously asked and answered in Bible Talk in the month of August of 1987. I am happy to run it again for the benefit of our kind reader who asked the question this time.

After Jesus had performed miracles of healing the blind, and dumb, and had cast out a devil, the Pharisees blasphemed, saying that Jesus did this "by Beelzebub the prince of devils (Matt. 12:22-32). Basically, this passage states that if one speaks against the Holy Ghost, he shall not be forgiven. This passage is often cited as an example of the unpardonable sin. When the context is studied, we find that Jesus performed miracles by the Holy Spirit that confirmed His claim as the Son of God. The Pharisees gave credit for His power to the devil for what God had done. Jesus states that those who saw the Spirit confirm through miracles the word of God, and then ascribed this miracle to the devil, had so sinned as not to be forgiven. It was an unpardonable sin!

That word has long since been confirmed (Heb. 2:2-3), and we will not face the decision as to the source of miracles; therefore we will not commit that sin. However, we commit an unpardonable sin when we adamantly refuse to repent of it! It can become a sin unto death because we are unwilling to repent! We can persist in sin until we reach the "point of no return," where we find it impossible to find a place of repentance. Therefore we are warned to not become like Esau, who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat. He waived his right to the blessing of his father and was rejected, "for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:15-17). A person toys with the fires of eternal torment and anguish when he persists in any sin, rather than repenting of--but there is the catch! We may find we are unable to repent, therefore not being able to be pardoned.

Question 39 : "What is the difference between a Hebrew, Israelite and Jew?"

Answer : The name, "Hebrew" was originally applied to Abraham (Gen. 14:13), but later used in making reference to that part of his descendants who went down into Egypt (Gen. 39:14; Ex. 1:19; 2:6, 7). After this the name was often applied to God's chosen people. "Israel" was first given to Jacob by the angel with whom he wrestled at the brook Jabbok (Gen. 32:22-28). Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, and his family was that part of Abraham's descendants who went down into Egypt and were called Hebrews. Jacob's descendants were frequently called the children of Israel, Israelites, or simply Israel.

After the kingdom was divided under the reign of Rehoboam (I Kings 12:1-16), the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam, and his government was known as the kingdom of Judah. Those who went with Jeroboam were called the kingdom of Israel. During this divided condition the people of the kingdom of Judah were sometimes called Jews. Since the return of the Hebrews from the Babylonian captivity, the name "Jew" has been applied to all the Israelites, regardless of their tribal relations (Esther 2:5). The tribes of Israel came into existence when Jacob (Israel) divided the land we know as Palestine between his sons, except Joseph, and his was divided between his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

The Hebrews numbered few when they went into Egypt but soon became a great multitude (Ex. 1:1-7). For sometime they were treated well due to the governmental involvement of Joseph. Upon his death and the government changing hands, a series of oppressions against the Jews followed. They had overbearing taskmasters who made them serve with rigor until their lives became bitter. The more they were oppressed, the more they grew (Ex. 1:8-13), to the point of the midwives

being commanded to kill all the sons born to the Hebrews (Ex. 1:15-22). Israel (God's chosen people) were symbolic of those who would follow God by faith and obey His will in this "wilderness of sin" (Acts 7:38). They who respond thusly are referred to as the "true tabernacle" or "Israel" (Heb. 9:2, 24).

Question 40 : "I read in Eph. 1:3 that all spiritual blessings are "in Christ." What does the "in Christ" mean?"

Answer : Salvation from the flood was used as a type of salvation which can be received today. Peter (I Pet. 3:20) used the term, "wherein" to describe where deliverance was to be found in the day of deluge. The "wherein" was describing a physical location where they had to place themselves before being saved. "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:23, 24). The wanderings of the children of Israel and their relationship with God focused on physical attributes and relationships. Today, God requires and expects us to enter a spiritual relationship with Him which will in turn affect the physical.

Numerous other things are found "in Christ": Redemption is found there (Rom. 3:24), one becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17), Spiritual life is there (I Jn. 5:11, 12), and reconciliation can be found only in Christ (2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:11-15). It seems as if the Lord would not place all these blessings in a place unreachable by man. Where is this "in Christ" of which the Bible speaks?

Reconciliation appears in Eph. 2:16, being basically the same thing as redemption and it is found **in one body**. In the earlier chapter to 1:22, 23, we find that the body is the church. Christ has been appointed head over (Col. 1:18, 24) and savior of that body (Eph. 5:23), which is the church. We further learn that the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47), it being the

only place where man can be complete and "in Christ" (Col. 2:9, 10). It is quite obvious then that the Lord saves those who are in Christ (I Thess. 5:9). According to holy writ, we are "Baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:7) or as recorded in I Cor. 12:13, "Baptized into one body" of which we have already spoken, being the church of our Lord. Being, "In Christ" is exactly the same as "walking in the light" (I Jn. 1:7-9) or living obediently (Heb. 5:9). If we die "out of Christ" we remain oblivious to salvation and God not glorified as desired (Eph. 3:21)!

Question 41 : I hear so much about, "humanism" today. What is it and how does it affect religious minded people?

Answer ; Although the term "humanism" does not appear in the Bible, the mentality which it represents is addressed in holy script. Humanism is a man-centered philosophy that attempts to solve problems of man and the world independent of God. Paul spoke of the "wisdom of the world" (humanism) and the "wisdom of God" (heavenly origin), (I Cor. 1:20-21). Paul suggested that even "if" God were foolish, He would still be "wiser than men" (I Cor. 1:25). Sometimes it is referred to as "secular humanism".

This problem of dealing with the wisdom of men is age-old. About 740 B.C., Isaiah said, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways; declares the Lord (55:8). The Greek thinkers such as Protagoras (5th century B.C.) said, "Man is the measure of all things." Christianity has so influenced thinking so much that man's wisdom is seldom found for more than 12 centuries.

Jesus spoke of His disciple's mission by saying, "I have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18), hoping that they would not be "of the world" (Jn. 17:16). Earthly successes have

replaced the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4) and “. . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Authentic Christianity stems from faith in God, not self; from worship of God, not self; from reliance on God’s power, not on power of self. It is easy for God to be made the servant of humans, not the reverse as it should be. Proper emphasis must be placed on self-esteem, self-gratification and self-fulfillment to self-discipline, self-restraint and selflessness. Humanism is nothing more than “intelligent ignorance” with attention focused on the man, not the Master! This gives rise to the disrespect found in schools, family, country, etc.

Please consider, Zech. 4:6; John 15:5; 2 Chron. 7:14, stand firm for the word of God and remember, that, “He who marries the spirit of the age soon becomes a widower.”

Question 42 : Is homosexuality wrong?

Answer : This was dealt with in an article of recent past, but due to the many complications we are experiencing today because of it, I submit the following additional information.

Homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. The men of Sodom were struck blind because they wanted to “know” the two messengers who were visiting Lot (Gen. 19). There were to be no Sodomites in Israel (Deut. 23:17); such sins are iniquity and an abomination before God (Ezek. 16:49-50). Jesus indicated that the people of Sodom would be punished for their sin (Lk. 10:11-12). Peter indicates that they were burned because of their ungodliness (2 Pet. 2:6-8). Jude stated that they were set forth as an example, “suffering punishment of eternal fire (Jude). God commands: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination” (Lev.

18:22. See also Lev. 18:24; I Kings 14:23-24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7). The seriousness of such activity is seen in Lev. 20:13: "And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

The New Testament writers also clearly condemn homosexuality. Paul writes, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which is due" (Rom. 1:26-27). The effeminate, the homosexual who will not repent and obey God, shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-11). The law was not made for the righteous but for abusers of themselves with men, for homosexuals (I Tim. 1:8-10).

Keep in mind, however, that Jesus died for ALL people (Heb. 2:9) which includes the homosexual. If they will repent (turn from or stop) their sin and obey God, they can be washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 6:9-11; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; I Cor. 12:13).

Question 43 : "Is gossip the same as not keeping confidential matters confidential?"

Answer : I think that I understand your question and will try my best to answer it as specifically as possible. One mark of a disciple of Christ is the ability to keep confidence. When a Christian is told something in confidence, the person whom this confidential information is given should have the integrity of heart not to repeat such information. Many times such information is highly personal and not for the consumption of

the general public. Occasionally each of us has the need to pour our hearts out to some close friend, in confidence, who can help us bear our burden and lend a sympathetic ear. This personal conversation should never be repeated!

When we break confidence and repeat the information we in essence become talebearers. . .we gossip. In the long ago Solomon said, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Pro. 11:13). Again in Proverbs 17:9 he stated, "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." The apostles Paul urges young widows to marry, because if they don't they have a tendency to be idle and to wander "about from house to house: and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (I Tim. 5:13).

Gossip is not a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), nor one of the desired Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Gossip causes division of friendships and can do untold damage. Some things are to never be repeated, if they are, it should be only with the consent of the source before doing so. An unruly tongue can do heartache and lead to slander, thus committing sin. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). If any be guilty of this sin, let him repent toward God, apologize to the one who has been wronged and mend the damage done.

Question 44 : "Were the days of Genesis 1 actual 24 hour days or long periods of time?"

Answer : Modern speculation of the liberal theologians and evolutionists have advocated for years that the "day" was merely a long geological age. It is my firm conviction that it was a 24 hour day. To make it otherwise implies that God actually needed more time and that He was not powerful

enough to create it in a 24 hour period. It could also imply that one is attempting to mix the Bible with evolution and is trying to prove that things came about over long periods of time to be in agreement with their views of man's evolutionary origin.

The evolutionist tries to convince us that life began in water while the Holy Spirit has man being created on land (Gen. 1). Note that the "days" of Gen. 1 are divided into light and darkness with exactly the same characteristics of the day with which we are familiar. "The evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:4, 5). The first day was made up of light and darkness, evening and morning. The Jews measured the day from sunset to sunset. The combining of the two periods, evening and morning, make *one day*. True it is that the sun did not appear until the fourth day. The heavenly bodies mark night and day, **not make them**. Night and day existed whether the sun was seen or not, because the rotations and movements of those bodies had been set in motion. We must realize that the plant-life came into existence on the third day. If each "day" represents millions of years, then the plant-life survived in periods of total darkness through half of each "geological age!"

God rested on the seventh (Sabbath) day, which from all indications was the same as the other six in duration. If it was not a 24 hour day, it strikes no resemblance to the sabbath observed by the Israelites. Does this mean that God is still resting (Ex. 20:10)? Adam was created in the sixth day and lived in Eden through the seventh and a portion of the eighth day. If each "day" lasted millions of years, Adam would have to be millions of years old at his death!

Question 45 : "What is the place called Hell? Is it real or imaginary?"

Answer : The term "Gehenna" appears in the scriptures 12

times in the New Testament and is a combination of two Hebrew words signifying "Valley of Hinnon." This valley was devoted to the worship of the idol, Moloch (2 Chron. 28:3), to whom they burned their children as an offering. This valley was held in abhorance by the Jews in returning from Babylonian captivity, using it for throwing dead carcasses and filth from the city which burned continually. Much like Hell in nature!

Hell is prepared for those who have lived contrary to the will of God. Hell is described as being a place eternal (Mt. 25:13; Rom. 16:26; Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14). Not a thousand years in duration as some have erroneously taught, but for ever. Regardless of the duration of one's sin, his punishment is everlasting (Matt. 20:6-12), if no repentance.

Hell is a place of outer **darkness** (2 pet. 2:4; Jude 13; Matt. 25:13), where there is not the presence of God, therefore, no source of light in that God is the "Father of lights" (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jas. 1:17).

The Bible says that it is a place of **fire**. It is referred to as a furnace (Matt. 13:42); Everlasting (Matt. 25:41); Not quenched (Mk. 9:44); fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10); Lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Fire is emblematic of pain and severe destruction. It is observed that darkness is prevailing in the midst of fire. Whatever the exact nature of the punishment, it is real and severe.

As mentioned above, this will be a place of **pain**. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth and torment from the flame (Matt. 25:30; Lk. 16:23-24).

The attitude which should be manifested by sound thinking people, requires they do everything within their power to avoid the above consequences brought about by disobedience to God. My admonition is that we begin living as we know we should (2 Cor. 5:10-11), focusing our attention upon heaven, the only other option. When comparing the two,

the choice is very easy. Will you be considered a sheep or goat (Matt. 25)?

Question 46 : "Is a picture the same as an idol? Do the scriptures teach against our having them?"

Answer : The practice which is being avoided by the querist is found in I Jn. 5:21, where we are told to, "flee idolatry." The question really is, what constitutes idolatry?

God instructed Israel, through Moses, to "not make any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:4-5; Deut. 5:8-9). We today, need to avoid any use of idols, serving or bowing to worship them!

In every case where God-forbade any "image," it was always with the idea of worship. Image worship is false worship, done out of ignorance, but we are to worship the "true and living God" (Acts 17:22-31). I am careful in the use of pictures, supposedly depicting Christ or other Bible character, due to not knowing how these men appeared. Each of us have mental pictures of the above mentioned, but don't be strapped by the mere conception of an artist! Most certainly if the pictures, carved or stamped images were to be worshipped, it would be wrong! Jesus was not opposed to an image of something or someone, but charged that the worship of it was wrong. Jesus used a coin on one occasion with the "image" or "superscription" of Caesar. They were told to "render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:17-22). If they were to worship Caesar or the coin of illustration, they would be wrong. If any likeness was wrong, we could not use a driver's license with our picture, pictures of family members and loved

ones, etc. (Ex. 20:4-5). To believe that we must eliminate all pictures or likenessess would forbid the use of money, pictures, art, printed clothing, furniture, etc. The thing to be avoided is found in Rom. 1:22-23.

Idolatry is an act of worship, and the printing of a drawing doesn't fall into that catagory, unless we decide the worship that which has been produced, we then have a problem.

Question 47 : "Who were the earthen vessels of whom Paul spoke?"

Answer : The passage in question if found in 2 Cor. 4:7. Some advocate that he is including every Christian today and yet others believed it to be the apostles only. Paul recounts his own spiritual experiences, his trials and tribulations, in this chapter. It is often called the "Psalm of the New Testament." In the first eleven verses, Paul gives a personal evaluation of his life for the Lord. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 cor. 4:5-7). Paul is speaking of the precious message from God that brings salvation to man, and though he often felt unworthy, yet God had chosen him as an earthen vessel to hold this heavenly treasure! It must be understood that Paul was using this terminology in referring to himself. The other apstoles held the same relationship with the Father to whom the mystery of the gospel had been committed. The apostles were the only ones who were receptacles for the unsearchable riches in this particular and unique way (I Cor. 2:10).

At the time of this writing, inspiration was in the "man" not the "book" for it had not yet been written. Peter later

wrote and said that "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19).

Even though reference was being made, in the passage under discussion, to Paul and the other apostles who were directly inspired by God through His Holy Spirit, in a sense we are earthen vessels, containing the gospel, having the word of God in our hearts and striving to save the lost. "Earthen," meaning flesh, or vessels made of the earth. This word was to be committed to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim.2:2). The manifold wisdom of God was to be made known by the church, being made up of "earthen vessels" as well (Eph. 3:10). In the Corinthian account, it is making reference to Paul and the other inspired apostles.

Question 48 : "Why is blood made such an issue in the Bible?"

Answer : True it is, that from the sprinkling of the door post down in the Egypt (Ex. 12:21-23) to the reference made to the Lamb of Revelation 21:22ff which implies the shedding of blood for sinful man, blood is a significant theme.

The blood in Egypt represented their means of deliverance as the blood of Jesus administered in baptism for our deliverance from and removal of sin (I Cor. 5:7; Eph. 1:7). Man has been separated from God, constituting "spiritual death" and is in need of redemption. This process of being "bought back" has occurred through the precious blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). Hebrews 9:22 informs us, that, "without shedding of blood is no remission." Through the many years of the Mosaical economy of God's dealing with His people, the blood of animals "atoned" for the sins of His people, which merely meant they were made "at-one-ment" with God having been estranged by sin (Heb. 10:4, 12).

We can be released from the grip of sin today by the

blood of Jesus, being justified (made whole). The observation has been made in giving definition to "justified", as meaning, "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned! Jesus shed His blood in His death. When we are baptized into Christ, we come in contact with his death wherein blood was shed. (Rom. 6:3). Prior to this contact one must be a believer (Jn. 8:24), demonstrating every willingness to repent (turn or stop) of sins (Lk. 13:3). When one stands amazed at the mighty grace of God and the saving power of Jesus, he will gladly confess the name of Jesus and savior, submitting to His Lordship (Matt. 10:32). After the heart has been adequately conditioned, a burial (baptism) in water symbolizing the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and our own death to sin will naturally follow (I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6: 5,6; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

The purpose for the blood theme was to introduce Jesus, who would come to the earth to die for a sin ladened people, by the giving of His blood, everyone who would obediently respond to Him and His gift for us, might have eternal life (John 3:16).

Question 49 : "Am I being disloyal to my religious upbringing to investigate and question my beliefs?"

Answer : The most precious possession that a person has is his soul (Mt. 16:26)! If he loses his soul, all is lost. We are repeatedly warned in holy writ against being deceived. Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceive you . . ." (Mt. 24:4). Having an improper attitude toward truth can be responsible for one believing a lie. Believing not the truth and having pleasure in unrighteousness can actually "damn" one's soul eternally (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

Investigation is commanded! If we refuse to investigate, but traditionally, ignorantly and blindly believe only what

someone else tells us without examination of God's word, to make sure that what is being believed is right, we are ripe for deception! Jesus advised the Jews to "Search the scriptures" (Jn. 5:39). The Bereans "searched the scriptures daily" to determine what was truth (Acts 17:11). Paul also admonished his hearers to "prove all things" (I Thess. 5:21). The standard by which we measure these things is the word of God. We are naive, to say the least, if we refuse to face up to the truth about being a part of an organization of men, not sanctioned by God. If we have to apologize about "our church" and the fact that it believes and practices things in contradiction to God's word, it is time to investigate, and if necessary, repent! If we can't cast our convictions and the religious body of which we are a part open to an honest evaluation by the scriptures, we have something to hide and have other motives than those of going to heaven in being associated with it.

The Bible teaches that everything is to be done "according to the pattern" given us in the Bible (Heb. 8:5). To offend in one point is to be guilty of all (James 2:10). We must "speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet.4:11), and be ready "to give an answer to every man" (I Pet. 3:15). Investigation in the light of God's word is not a terror to those who have a genuine desire to follow Christ. When error is pointed out to an honest person, instead of being offended, he will count it a personal favor.

Question 50 : "Am I being disloyal to my religious upbringing to investigate and question my beliefs?" (part II).

Answer : In this article, I would like to give some points to help the querist of last week in knowing what to investigate in regards to their religion. The churches of Christ urge investigation in the light of the Bible on all points of doctrine and practice. Please examine the following points:

Creed. Instead of a document compiled by human beings, our creed is a living person, the Lord Jesus. Peter declared Him the "Son of the Living God" (Mt. 16:16). The queen's treasurer confessed the same (Acts 8:37), and Martha acknowledged Him as being God's Son (Jn. 11:27).

Rule of Faith. Rejecting human manuals and disciplines, the church of the Lord accepts as their only rule of faith and practice, the word of Christ. This is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) and is a complete and sufficient guide (2 Pet. 1:3), furnishing one completely "unto every good work" (2 Tim.3:16, 17) to which we must not add or diminish from these inspired words (Rev. 22:18-19).

Church Government. The hierarchies and ecclesiasticism which govern prominent religious bodies today did not come into existence until hundreds of years after the establishment of Christ's church. His church is broken up into local congregations which are autonomous. Christ is the only head of His church (Col. 1:18). Each local congregation is governed by a plurality of bishops or elders, selected from among their respective members (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1-2). The deacons, evangelists and members within the local church, all serve under the oversight of the bishops or elders (Heb. 13:17).

Divine Law of Regeneration. Believers became members of the New Testament church by obeying the same law of pardon. Each person believed in Christ as his Saviour (Jn. 8:24), repented of his sins (Acts 3:19), confessed his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and was baptized for the removal of sins (Acts 2:38) On obeying these commands God added him to His church (Acts: 2:47). Have you done these?

Question 51 : "Since the seed fell among four kinds of soils, does this mean that Christians will believe different things?"

Answer : Not at all. The four places where seed fell represents

condition of hearts. There were only two kinds of results from the fallen seed: fruitful and unfruitful! The passage in question is found in Luke 8:4-11. Even though the seed was sown in every direction, fruit was not always forthcoming. It was neither a reflection on the seed or sower. The burden of proof rests upon the reception of the ground upon which it fell. Three of the seeds produced plants, but the seed that fell by the wayside never became a living plant. The soil (heart) was so hard and it could not take root (no faith). The difference in the results was not affected by their beginning, but by their fruit produced, or the lack thereof. Those represented by the other three sowings that reached planthood (withered, choked, fruitful) either produced fruit or were barren following their planting. Non-fruitful Christians are in peril for: "every branch in me (in Christ) that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away" (Jn. 15:2), "casting it forth as a branch, and is withered . . . and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (Jn. 15:6).

What it takes for a sinner to be right with God, Jesus said, was to "believe and be saved" (Lk. 8:12). He was not affirming faith only, but was describing by one word, believe, the whole plan of salvation, namely: trust, repentance, and baptism (Acts 2:36-38). The jailor was told in one word what to do to be saved, that being believe (Acts 16:31). It is interesting that after he had this explained to him, he repented and was baptized the same hour of the night. In one word all a sinner does in becoming a Christian is described in the use of the word believe. The same is found in Rom. 5:1 and Luke 8:12. The seed germinates in the heart causing belief which then produces fruit (obedience) necessitating: repentance, confession, baptism and faithful living (I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38; Rev. 2:10).

Question 52 : "Is it a sin to waste time?"

Answer : Ben Franklin observed in his *Poor Richard's Almanac*, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

Paul told the Ephesians (5:16) to "redeem the time because the days are evil." Time is the best builder. Given time, we are expected to grow from a spiritual babe to a mature Christian. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers" (Heb. 5:12). Time is the best arbitrator in restoring broken relationships, which it did when differences arose between Paul and Barnabas regarding John Mark (Acts 15:37-39; I Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:11).

The brevity and uncertainty of man's life demands proper utilization of it. Time is not important to God because He has all of it, but is to man for he has so little with which to work (Ps. 90:2; 2 Pet. 3:8). The psalmist abbreviated this thought by saying, "Jehovah, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; let me know how frail I am" (Ps. 39:4). We should be mindful to "number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom (Ps. 90:12) in addition to working while it is day, night is no time to work (Jn. 9:4).

The Bible condemns idleness and laziness! The answer to your question would be yes! Jesus rebuked idleness when He asked the question, "Why stand ye here idle?" (Matt. 20:6). The idle soul is punished by hunger (Prov. 19:15) and the wearing of rags (Prov. 23:12). Being idle leads to other forms of unacceptable behavior, such as being busybodies and going from house to house tatling and gossiping (I Tim. 5:13).

We waste time and become idle by failing to apply ourselves (Prov. 6:6), being poorly organized (Prov. 22:29), feeding our minds and wasting our time on cheap literature and unwholesome television watching (Prov. 23:7), recreation and entertainment that does not build character, but destroys (I Thess. 5:22). Too often we spend too much time brooding over past injuries (Matt. 18:15), pondering past mistakes and

worrying (Phil. 3:13, 14; Rom. 8:28), or spending too much time in bed (Prov. 20:30). Redeem the time!

Question 53 : “Are there indicators to help a person know if he is living the wrong way or believing the wrong thing?”

Answer : Yes. The Christian life is described as the “way” (Matt. 7:13,14). It is within the character of the Devil to pull us from the proper way (I Pet. 5:8). The word of God provides us with helps along the way to live the proper way.

If we are worshiping men or merely men’s way, our worship is vain (Matt. 15:9). Those who do so become blind, leading themselves and others from the acceptable path (Matt. 15:14). The end result is the uprooting of such (Matt. 15:13), with that which they espouse being condemned as “another gospel” (Gal. 1:8). Therefore, **false doctrine** would be a sign.

Ignorance has played havoc to the lives of men for years! It was ignorance that crucified Christ (Acts 3:17) and continues to destroy the lives of men as it did in the days of Hosea (4:6). Only the truth can make us free and deliver us from the shackles of sin (Jn. 8:32). This stresses the importance of a daily study and observance of God’s word.

Examine yourself to see if you have a **prejudiced** mind. The typical definition of prejudice is “pre-judgment.” The resurrection was rejected because of prejudiced attitudes which were not formed according to knowledge (Acts 17:32). This causes the mind to become closed, making it impossible to teach such a person. Jesus had to contend with this problem during His ministry. We often oppose and reject truth because of conflicts with our life-style or traditional ways.

King Saul had a problem of **pleasing** men (I Sam. 15:24). It led him to disobey God as it does men today. Pilate delivered Christ for the same reason ((Matt. 27:24), and kept the rulers from obedience (Jn. 12:42, 43).

A real obvious sign of one heading the wrong way is **procrastination**, putting off, or waiting to do right. Felix did so (Acts 24:25). We can sin by the same vice today. It is possible to be over-cautious to the point of doing nothing as demonstrated by the one-talent man (Matt. 25:25). We must be cautious, but not over-cautious and sin by "doing nothing!"

Question 54 : "Do sinners receive the Holy Spirit before being baptized?"

Answer : The Lord had given specific promise that "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28), and fulfillment shown for the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff); but the Gentiles, all flesh, had not been included. As the Jews had received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, so the Gentiles were included with the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48). In neither case did the reception of the baptism of the Spirit bring salvation! On Pentecost, the apostles were saved before the Holy Spirit fell on them. In the case of the Gentiles, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord **AFTER** they had received the Holy Spirit (10:48). The baptism of the Spirit was never a command, for it was administered only by the Lord, never by man; and was not for the removal of sins. Therefore, the household of Cornelius had to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. This baptism was "water baptism" as v.47 plainly shows.

Only those on Pentecost, and those in Cornelius' house, were baptized with the Holy Spirit. When Peter made his defence for baptizing Gentiles, he stated, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). To find a precedent for this baptism of the Holy Spirit, he had to go all the way back to Pentecost in Jerusalem; for there was no other example he could cite!

In every case of conversion, baptism occurred for remission of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit: but not the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." Each one who was baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit, not Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit was received as an indwelling guest (Acts 5:32; Gal. 4:6). The effects of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, manifesting Himself through God's word can be found by reading Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 8:9, 14-16; I Cor. 12:13. The scripture gives us no indication that we are to receive "Holy Spirit baptism" today, but we can receive the word, let it dwell richly in our hearts, and allow the Holy Spirit to reside representatively through that word (Col. 3:16).

Question 55 : "Can you please help me to understand the difference between the first and second resurrection?"

Answer : The only time, "first resurrection" is found in the Scriptures is in Rev. 20:6. John is shown a vision of one coming from heaven and binding Satan for 1,000 years. It is clear that this is referring to Christ, being the only one having "descended" to the earth (Eph. 4:9), as Heb. 2:14-15 shows that Christ has overcome Satan by His death on the cross. John saw the "souls of them that have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 20:4), an allusion to all those who had suffered for Christ and remained true to Him. The "second death" (hell) had no power over those who had experienced the "first resurrection"--those who became Christians (Rev. 20:5, 6, 14).

Christ is the one who descended and bound Satan by His death upon the cross through the shedding of His blood which freed man from sin. Sin was the Devil's only hold upon man. The "thousand years" began when Christ's reign began (I Cor. 15:24-26; Col. 1:13), and those who "live with Christ" are those

who have been “raised together with him” (Rev. 20:4-6; Col. 2:12). The apostle Paul shows that what is called “the first resurrection” in Rev. 20 is “baptism into Christ” (Rom. 6:3-6) in which we are “raised with Christ.” Baptism into Christ is called a “death,” a “burial” and a “resurrection” (Rom. 6:3-6). Hell, which is the “second death” (Rev. 20:14) has no power over those who are in Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; 8:1-2).

The “first resurrection” is our being raised to “walk in newness of life” in Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). As faithful as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may have been, they were never “in Christ.” They lived before His death on the cross, and before salvation was offered “in him” (Eph. 1:7) according to God’s eternal purpose “in Christ” (Eph. 3:11). The “first resurrection” is in this gospel age, in which those who live with Christ have no need to fear the devil’s power, because, they belong to Christ.

Question 56 : “If baptism is required for salvation, how could the thief on the cross go to heaven without it?”

Answer : There is no indication that Jesus “took him to heaven” at all. Jesus said “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:43). Jesus later stated that He had, “not yet ascended unto the Father” (Jn. 20:17), but the thief was to be with Him. Jesus was “in the tomb” (Jn. 19:42) at the close of that day, which was considered a “resting place.” That is also where the thief was. When comparing Matt. 27:40-44, Mk. 15:25-32 and Lk. 23:36-43, one will find that those present were “mocking” Jesus—including the two thieves. They pretended to believe that Jesus was really a King (Mt. 27:42; Mk. 15:32), but this was only to mock Him. We are not given all the words of the two thieves as they “cast upon him the same reproach” (Mt. 27:44). Based on a simple comparative

reading of the three passages, I find no indication that the thief was promised salvation.

Even if the thief was saved, assuming that it is what the words of Jesus mean, it still has nothing to do with our salvation today. Jesus had the power "on earth to forgive sins" (Mk. 2:10) on any terms He chose, or without any terms being given. But when He died on the cross, a change was made. Before the death of Jesus, His will was not in effect; after His death, our eternal inheritance is based upon that will (Heb. 9:15-17).

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, He told His apostles to go preach the gospel, baptizing believers for salvation (Mk. 16:15, 16). Baptism followed repentance (Acts 2:38). "Both men and women" were being baptized (Acts 8:12). Ananias told a penitent believing Saul, "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). In fact the "book of conversions" (Acts) records not one person appealing to the thief on the cross to get out of doing what the Lord had said about baptism! "As many as received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The Lord made baptism a part of His will, in rejecting baptism one rejects the word of Christ!

Question 57 : "If all are sinners, how can we be a saint? Can we be both at the same time?"

Answer : How are we using the word "sinner?" The scriptures teach that, "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I Jn. 1:8). We are all sinners, in the sense that we have sinned, but Jesus promised, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). When one is "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5), he is "called out of darkness and into light" (I Pet. 2:9). When this process of purification has taken place,

one has been "sanctified" or made a "saint" (Jn. 17:17). This merely means that one has been "set apart" for God's holy purposes, resulting from obedience to His word, being made a "peculiar people" by this process of removal from darkness to light, and obtaining mercy (I Pet. 2:5-10). This occurs even though he is "walking in the light" (I Jn. 1:5-7) in fellowship with God, and sin being committed (vs. 7-10).

Basically, there are two kinds of sinners, as strange as it may seem: Those who have come to Christ and are forgiven, those who have not and are still in their sins. Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). The question is focusing upon the "forgiven sinner" or the saint. We are made free from sin by the blood of Christ (I Jn. 1:7), as long as we remain "in the light" and thus "in fellowship" with God because we are "in Christ" (Rom. 6:3-4; 8:1; Eph. 1:3-7). Our sins are forgiven and not "reckoned" or "imputed" to us.

The ordinary use of "saint" and "sinner" in the scriptures differentiated between as a "forgiven sinner" and "unforgiven sinner" as used above. A "saint" is one who is a child of God (Gal. 3:27), cleansed by the blood of Jesus (I Jn. 1:7). A sinner is one who lives for self, not belonging to God, and rebelling against God's rule for his life. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners" (Jn. 9:31), like Paul who was "the chief of sinners" (I Tim. 1:15). When "in Christ" we are "saints" (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2), sinful (I Jn. 2:1-2), but forgiven (I Jn. 1:7), being no longer under condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

Question 58 : "What kind of music is acceptable in worship? I hear of quartet, choirs, vocal bands, etc., are these acceptable according to the Bible?"

Answer God did NOT specify vocal music. He specified

singing in worship. We must remember that God's instruction has a purpose and it is not just requirement for requirement sake. In scriptural worship participants are, "Speaking one to another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. . . Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. . . Sing with the spirit, and sing with the understanding also" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; I Cor. 14:15). There are several points to consider in the above passages. Singing is to "speak, teach and admonish" which requires that those hearing do so with "understanding". God said to "sing" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), because singing accomplishes these things. Instruments can not do any of these things, nor do other kinds of vocal music (such as whistling, humming or mimicking instruments with vocal sounds). We need to get back to the idea that God accepts in worship only what He has authorized in His word. We could easily be guilty of that which Nadab and Abihu (sons of Aaron, and priests-Ex. 28:1) were guilty. They offered "strange" fire in executing their duties of sacrifice to God. Their worship was rejected of God and they were consumed (Lev. 10:1). Though they were religious leaders offering worship, it was insulting to God because it was "strange." Cain did the same thing when he offered fruit/grain instead of animal (blood) as a thank offering (Gen. 4:1-25). We need to be willing to accept the idea that God accepts in worship only what He has authorized in His word.

It is not necessary to have to choose between a sermon for teaching and singing. Both were authorized and both are acceptable, in their own way doing the same thing, reinforcing what the other has attempted to do. Worship is not a performer/spectator-type activity. We are all to "teach and admonish one another" (Col. 3:16). I refuse to argue with God, so I must conclude that singing does indeed teach those who hear and/or participate. Other innovations and additions having been made by men cannot make the same claims!

Question 59 : “Can you explain where and when the battle of Armageddon will take place?”

Answer : I fear that Rev. 16:16 mention of the “battle of Armageddon” to be one of the most misunderstood and abused subjects of the Bible. The only time that it is mentioned in the entire Bible is in the cited passage. The entire chapter deals with God’s punishment upon a wicked world. Megiddo was an important fortress city in Galilee, which controlled both the “King’s Highway” and the “Via Maris” (way of the sea), which made its crossing near that city. Long before Solomon made Megiddo such an important part of his military strategy, Megiddo had been important to several different military leaders, and many important battles had been fought there in the plains just below. Thus, Megiddo came to symbolize military battle. This is the usage being made in Rev. 16.

A careful study of Revelation will reveal that the “battle of Armageddon” is not just a single battle at the end of the world (as many imagine). That battle symbolizes all of the battles the saints of God fight against the forces of Satan. Revelation does not describe literal battles of nations, fought with swords, guns, or bombs. Revelation does describe the spiritual battle, often in military terms, between Christ and Satan: between Christians and forces of evil. Some try to tie Armageddon to the signs pictured in Rev. 14:20, and claim it literal: “There came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” To believe that literal blood will be six feet deep across the Valley of Jezreel for a distance of two hundred miles is extreme! That would be five times as long as the valley! Rev. 16 seems to imply that all the kings of the earth and the whole world will be gathered together to do battle (v. 14). In my visit to Megiddo and the Valley of Jezreel, I did not

see enough area upon which even two armies of any size could clash. This has to be figurative language, describing in literal terms the spiritual battle in which Christians are presently engaged. If we are living for Christ, we are engaged in the "battle of Armageddon!"

Question 60 : "Is it wrong to trust in Astrology and acknowledge the "signs" of our birth date?"

Answer : The Bible gives us every indication that to believe in such is a sin and that it is conflicting to embrace astrology and be a faithful Christian at the same time. Astrology was classified by God as a false religion, the same as witchcraft and idolatry. These were commonly practiced by the Canaanites when God was preparing Israel to be led into their land by Joshua. God's warning to them was, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. 18:9-12).

Astrology is supposed to be based on the positioning of the stars, with twelve sections (or "signs") making up the year. But, as any astronomer can tell you, their computations are off by at least six weeks! This merely means that not one of the signs is actually in the month it is supposed to be. The remainder of their theories are just as false as the monthly signs. God warned against trusting in astrology in the Bible (Isa. 47:12; Dan. 1:20; 2:27; 4:7, etc.). The reason for the warning is simple. God wants us to trust in Him and Him

alone. Too many trust the stars to reveal the way they are to live or even cast blame upon the stars for their lack of success. Shakespeare had Cassius to say, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings" (*Julius Caesar*, Act I). The only message told us by the stars is how insignificant we are (Psa. 8:3-4).

Just "playing" with astrology yet not believing it, makes as much sense as playing at idolatry, witchcraft or adultery! The truth is that astrology is a kind of false religion, and the Christian can have nothing to do with it.

Question 61 : "Do the scriptures actually forbid the use of things such as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.

Answer : It is my conviction that in principle they do. We often misuse I Cor. 6:15-20 in an attempt to prove such. The instruction given is to not "defile the temple of the Holy Spirit." The emphasis is not upon the physical body in this passage, but the mis-use of the body for sinful (lustful) pursuits. A diseased body is not defiled in the spiritual sense, but can be affected adversely as to its effectiveness and longevity. We are to be good stewards in all things (I Pet. 4:10). To assume that we can treat our body anyway we want, is to assume too much. We were created by God to be used in His service (Ecc. 12:13) and for His glory (Eph. 3:21). God has much to say about "alcohol abuse" in the scriptures, usually being referred to as drunkenness. It is classified as a "work of the flesh" along with fornication, idolatry, strife and similar behavior (Gal. 5:19-21). Wine became the downfall of Noah (Gen. 9). Solomon wrote, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Many other passages are written to show the danger and sinfulness of liquor (Prov. 23:29-35; Eph. 5:18; I Tim. 3:3; I

Pet. 4:3; Rev. 17:2; 18:3; etc.). The same would be true of any other chemical that would numb the brain, inhibit clear thinking, destroy families, and make one suicidal.

Tobacco is not found in the Bible, so nothing is found therein that specifically prohibits it. This is the reason for qualifying in the first paragraph, "in principle" it is addressed. I am convinced that smoking is harmful to a Christian's health, harmful to his influence and spiritual growth. I find it hard to imagine Jesus imbibing in any of these vices. Paul told Timothy, "Be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). Smoking tends to "sear the conscience" (I Tim. 4:2) because of efforts to justify the addiction. We are to "cleanse ourselves from such defilements. . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Our body is an instrument, given by God, to honor Him by our lives.

Question 62 : "Do various denominations compose the church?"

Answer : No! The church, His body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23), is composed of people, not denominations! I Cor. 12:1-11 is often misunderstood and misapplied to advocate that the church is one body and made up of "many members" identified erroneously as denominations. True it is that there is one body with many members, but they are bound together by their common obedience to truth and relationship to God (vs. 12-14). The basis of fellowship in this body is that all the members "walk in the light" (I Jn. 1:7-9), not "unity in diversity!"

Not only do denominations not compose the body of Christ, they are sinful and in direct competition with the one body. Jesus prayed that all believers should be one (Jn. 17:20-

21) and every denomination stands in opposition to that prayer. "Denominate" means to "denote" or to "sect(ion)" themselves off from all others due to at least one peculiar or different teaching. Paul forbade the Corinthians to let this happen, but instructed them to "speak the same thing, be of the same mind and let there be no divisions among you" (I Cor. 1:10-13). There is but "one body" (Eph. 4:4-6), that being the church (Eph. 1:22,23). Denominations do not present "one body" nor "one faith," but advocate "joining the church of *your* choice." Does Christ not have a choice (Matt. 7:21; Mt. 16:18)?

Areas where division most usually appear are: doctrine, salvation, worship, organization, etc. Regardless of what creates the division, it is still wrong (I Cor. 1:10). Paul explained the nature of the division in Corinth: "Now this I Mean, that each of you saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:10-13). By definition, these groups lining up behind men were "denominations", bearing different names and teachings. It was wrong then, it is wrong now! Christ can't be divided, and we are members of Him (Rom. 12:5). Those who have believed and been baptized (Mk. 16:16) into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), the Lord saves and adds to His church (Acts 2:41-47), not a denomination for they are without divine approval.

Question 63 : "How does a person avoid being overcome when problems enter a person's life?"

Answer : The nature of the problem must be taken into consideration in attempting to answer this question.

We must acknowledge that everybody has problems.

Some are self inflicted, others due to misfortunes. The admonition is given in I Cor. 10:12-13 to not become too sure of self "lest he fall." The promise is given that one would not be "tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." We are warned about having "an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God. . . Let us fear, therefore, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 3:12; 4:1) See also: James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1-2; 5:4-6). Each of us make the choice to either "fall from grace" (Gal. 5:4; I Cor. 10:12) or stand for God. God limits our trials and temptations which should help us to realize that we can handle whatever comes our way (I Cor. 10:12; James 1:25; Rom. 8:28). In Christ, there is an abounding comfort (2 Cor. 1:5) for He was "tempted in all points like as we are" (Heb. 4:15), yet, He continued to do the Lord's will (Lk. 22:42). Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7), but learned that the Lord's "grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). Paul's response then was, "Be strong in the Lord. . . I can do all things through Christ" (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13).

James encouraged believers to rejoice over trial, because of the patience gained thereby (1:3). Paul determined that "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). He challenged the Corinthian Christians to remain strong and continue to do a good work for the Lord, because "your labour is not vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). "God works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . If God is for us, who can be against us?" (I Cor. 15:57; Rom. 8:31).

Question 64 : “Can I know for sure that I am saved? Isn’t there always an element of doubt?”

Answer : You have asked a very vital question. It is hard to imagine God giving us such definite hope of going to a most certain place called heaven without some form of assurance of living acceptably.

There were no questions in the mind of the apostle John about this matter, “These things have I written unto you, that ye **may know** that ye have eternal life” (I Jn. 5:13). Can a person know that he is lost? By the same source that makes the answer to this question obvious also answers questions about our being saved. As Peter preached on Pentecost, a host of hearers were pricked in heart crying out, “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). This is the source of learning about our saved or lost condition. When a person knows that he is to believe in Jesus, repent of sins, confess Christ and be baptized into Christ (Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; Rom. 6:3-4), he then does them. The Bible says he is saved when he obediently responds to the above mentioned.

The problem is not faith in God nor the Bible, but we doubt ourselves. This is the reason that we are saved by grace of God through faith and not ourselves. Obedience is the registering of our response to His grace (Eph. 2:8-10). Verse 10 says we should continue to walk in “good works” which tends to keep us spiritually alive wherein the blood of Jesus continues to keep us pure from condemnation by forgiveness (I Jn. 1:7-9). God will not “impute sin” or “lay blame” to obedient people (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 4:8; 8:1; Eph. 1:7). This does not imply perfection, but does mean being forgiven by a perfect Saviour, constantly. Read these passages and I think that you will find that the sincere Christian IS saved: “The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but to us

who are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18). There should be no more doubt about our salvation than the existence of God, because faith in both come from the exact same source--God's word.

Question 65 : "Because the Jews gave a tenth, should we give a tenth or more?"

Answer : We are under a better covenant than that which was given to Israel at Sinai. This "better covenant" has "better promises" (Heb. 8:6). We are also instructed that our righteousness must "exceed that of the Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20). A question must be raised as to how much the Israelites really gave.

Israel's tithe was not actually a gift but more of a tax. It was placed upon their income to serve as an inheritance for those of the Levitical (priestly tribe) family who served for their service in the tabernacle of the congregation (Num. 18:21). Israel also gave a tenth of their harvested crops, increase in herds, etc., to be used in the sacrifice and worship (Deut. 14:22-25). They left part of their crops in the field to feed the poor and hungry (Lev. 19:9-10; Matt. 6:1, 2). When all the sacrifices of both animals and field crops put together, the Israelites gave close to 40% of their regular income.

The New Testament does not mention a percentage or dollar amount. We are told to "seek first the kingdom" (Matt. 6:33) and "present ourselves a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:2). We are then to give out of our love for the Lord (2 Cor. 9:7; I Cor. 16:2). It is not a tax assessed nor an amount legislated by the Lord, but each person must look into their own heart and income, then purposes out of the goodness of his heart! No one else can decide for you. We can not delegate or relegate the expressions of our love and devotion to someone else.

For the most part, most of us would give too little of our

means if it were to be limited to 10%, too much for those who are destitute. The Lord performed wisely by not decreeing a percentage as He did with Israel in the Old Testament. He merely tells us to prove our love in our giving (2 Cor. 8:8). If love for the Lord is present in our hearts, we should not find it difficult to give cheerfully and not as if we were being constrained. We are motivated by our love for the Lord with our expressions of gratitude are to be generous and natural.

Question 66 : “Sometimes I feel as if my religion is more man-made than originating from God. How can I know if it is from men?”

Answer : The simple, straight-forward truth is, study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15) and examine that which you are being taught and believe, to make sure it is biblical (1 Jn. 4:1). It is of concern what we believe and where we got it!

We must ponder the warnings of the wise man of old as he stated, “There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Also, “It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). The Lord 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” (Matt. 7:21).

I would like to suggest that you contrast the teachings and theories of the man-made religions and their “I think so’s” with a “thus saith the Lord.” Let me give you a few examples to illustrate what I am saying. There is **one** faith (Eph. 4:4), yet men encourage us to believe that there are many faiths and that we may attend the church or “faith of our choice.” Do we have a choice? The Bible teaches that there is only one body (Eph. 4:4) which is the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). In spite of this, men advocate a *multiplicity* or *plurality* in defiance of God’s

word! The faithful are called in one body (Col. 3:15), and the dictates of men advocate *anywhere*, as long as one is sincere. It contradicts the Bible. We are told in holy writ to speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10); men allow *anything to be spoken and believed*. The Kingdom of God is to be sought first (Matt. 6:33) while the world encourages us to seek first one's *denomination*. This too violates scriptures. We are saved in the church (Eph. 5:25-26; Col. 1:13, 14), while men would lead us to believe it is *without*. The Bible so clearly proclaims that "He that believeth and is **baptized shall be saved. . .**" (Mk. 16:15, 16), but men reverse it to say "he that believeth is saved and *may be baptized* if he desires." God's word requires that we confess **Christ** (Rom. 10:9-10), but man, *feelings*. Remember, "God is not the author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33).

Question 67 : "What is an apostate?"

Answer : The word "apostate" is a derivation of the Greek word "apostas'ia" which means, "a falling away, a withdrawal, a defection." (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary by Tenny). An apostate is one who has committed apostasy or drawn away from the truth. We would say that they had "backslidden" or "departed from the faith" (I Tim. 4:1). The principle appears twice in the New Testament. Paul was falsely accused of teaching the Jews "to forsake Moses", or literally rendered, "apostasy from Moses." Paul also warned the Thessalonian Christians that the day of the Lord would not come until there was first a "falling away" or the coming of "the apostasy" (2 Thess. 2:3).

It is possible to have an apostate person or group of people. Hymenaeus and Alexander had left Paul and would be considered as having become apostates (I Tim. 1:19, 20). Demas had "forsaken me, having loved this present world. ."

(2 Tim. 4:10). In making a study of the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, one can readily see congregations of people who have been guilty of apostasy. Notice the words describing the spiritual condition of these churches. Ephesus was guilty of having “left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4). The Pergamos church was guilty of **holding** the doctrine of Balaam, eaten things offered to idols and had **committed fornication** (Rev. 2:14). They were also **teaching** others to do the same. The only comment about the Sardis church is that they were **dead**! Something must have drawn them away and caused them to become apostate (Rev. 3:1). The church at Thyatira was reprimanded for “suffering”, allowing or **condoning Jezebel** with her seductive devices of causing the servants of the Lord to commit fornication and eat things offered to idols (Rev. 2:20). It seems as indifference and apathy had caused the church at Laodicea to **become lukewarm**. They were neither with or against the cause of righteousness; they repulsed the Lord (Rev. 3:16).

The solution is found in Rev. 2:5, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and *repent*, and *do* the first works.”

Question 68 : How is a Christian to view Christmas?

Answer : The Bible offers not a word to help us determine the date of the Saviour’s birth. History is likewise silent. “The day of Christ’s birth cannot be ascertained from the New Testament, or indeed from any other source. “The fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity...”(McClintock and Stong Ency.) Chrysostom in 386 stated that it was not celebrated until 376 A.D. Dec. 25th was determined by the decree of Liberious, bishop of the church of Rome in 354 A.D. This date was disputed and other days set forth, but Dec. 25th was selected because “The

Western church ordered the feast to be celebrated on the day of Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun" (Americana). The name "Christes Mass" reveals its origin!

If it is not of Biblical origin, are we to then observe this as a holy day? Jesus taught us to "observe all things whatsoever (He) commanded" (Mt. 28:20). We should not observe it as a religious holiday if not commanded by our Lord. Paul warns the saints to "not go beyond the things which are written" (I Cor. 4:6). To celebrate it as a religious holiday would be vain worship for it is a precept of men (Mt. 15:9). God gave His church only one special day - the first day of the week, (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2), this is the day of Christ's resurrection and the beginning date of the church (Mk. 16:1-11; Acts 2). Sinful man is not in the position to help God in selecting the proper acts of worship. Had God wanted this day to be observed, He would have told us, The Galatian Christians took up the observance of "days, and months, and seasons, and years," Paul said, "I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11). The reason for concern is shown in Gal. 1:6-8; they were "removing from.. the grace of Christ unto a different gospel."

Question 69 : Were the ten commandments (Ex.20) brought over into the New Testament and binding today?"

Answer : The answer must be no to both parts of the question. We are dead to and delivered from the law (Rom. 7:4,6) because it was "nailed to the cross" at the crucifixion of Christ (Col.2:14; Rom. 10:4). Paul insisted that it had been abolished or done away (2 Cor. 3:11-13). it was only to serve as a schoolmaster or tutor until the coming of the gospel (Gal. 3:24,25), because no flesh could be justified therein (Rom. 3:20). The new law made the first old and took it out of the way (Heb. 8:13: 10:9). The transition was so serious that those

who keep it are charged as having fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4)!

Some of the points covered by the ten commandments are incorporated and enlarged on in the New Testament. Even though they are similar, we must keep in mind that the law was fulfilled, abrogated and completed before the new could begin, because there could not be a new will or covenant activated until there was the death of the testator (Heb. 9:16,17). Note the following comparisons of the commandments and the New Testament principle: 1 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" - "Turn from these vain things unto a living God.." (Acts 14:14). 2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image" - "... Keep yourselves from idols" (I Jn. 5:21). 3. "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain" - "Swear not" (James 5:12). 4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" - No command in New Testament to keep the Sabbath, but the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1, 2). 5. "Honor thy father and mother" - "...obey parents in the Lord.... Honor thy father and mother" (Eph. 6:1,2). 6. "Thou shalt not kill" - "Thou shalt not kill" (Rom. 13:9). "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I Jn. 3:15). 7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery"- Adulterers not permitted in the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9). 8. "Thou shalt not steal" - "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. 4:28). 9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness" - "Lie not one to another" (Col. 3:9). 10. "Thou shalt not covet" - "Covetousness is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

Question 70 : "Are any Bible principles violated when I make a New Year's resolution?"

Answer : Quite the contrary! There are several passages that indicate that we should "resolve" to see that certain plans are made for our lives. The beginning of a new year is a good time to take assessment; making use of the calendar as though it were a gauge for monitor monitoring ourselves. It is a good

time to reflect upon what has been accomplished and how we have been blessed. Paul admonished that we, "... with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to the Lord" (Phil. 4:6). The disposition of the Christian should be that of, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). The grace of God deserves thanksgiving of many that it might "redound to the glory of God" (2 Cor. 4:15). Paul, therefore, simply said, "Be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15).

Any man intending to build a building, will first sit down and count the cost to see if he has what is necessary, lest he be mocked for his lack of planning and/or commitment to the task (LK.14:28). Paul's record to Timothy indicates that commitment is to be made and that God will assist us in Keeping it (2 Tim. 1:12). We are to aggressively pursue our course for the coming year, for, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; (Ecc. 9:10). As was the case with Joshua, so must it be with us in that we "choose...this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua 24:15).

It is so vital that we develop the attitude of Paul in regards to what we do. He qualified his desires by saying, "if the Lord wills" (I Cor. 4:19). An interesting thought has been expressed through the years that has some merit, that being, "We should pray as if it were all up to God and work like it is all up to me !" What a wonderful approach to living out our desires for life. Paul's approach was to forget the things of the past that were discouraging and negative, "reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-15). He charges us to do the same. Have a great New Year!

Question 71 : "What does it mean to sacrifice and are we to do it today ?"

Answer : The first recorded account of sacrifice appeared in

Gen. 4 :3,4, offered by Cain and Abel. Sacrifice was prominent throughout the Bible as a means of expressing love to God. The lamb was the primary object of sacrifice. Whatever was offered had to be without blemish and was to express thanks or to atone for sins (Lev. 22:19,20; Heb.9:22).

The Jewish system was imperfect, yet typical in nature, It was but a mere "image" of things to come, speaking of Christ who was to be a proto-type of that system. Only in the sacrifice of Jesus was real forgiveness realized (Heb. 10: 1,2; I Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8). John referred to Jesus as being "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). Christ has become our High Priest to offer an unblemished lamb (himself) "to appear in the Most Holy Place (Heaven) in the presence of God for us (Rev. 1:12; Heb. 7:28; Heb. 8:1; 9:24). We actually have Christ the Priest offering Christ the lamb for us, life, to obtain eternal life (Heb. 8:3; 10:12). Unlike the sacrificial system of old, where a repetition of offerings had to be made year after year for the sins of the people; Christ entered into the sacrificial chamber one time for the sins of the whole world (Heb. 9:25, 26, 28) with sanctification and perfection being made possible for ever in so doing (Heb. 10:14).

Should we sacrifice today? Yes, but the nature and object of offering has changed somewhat. They offered life in the form of an animal characterized by the shedding of blood. We have not been asked to die for Him and His cause but to live for Him. Paul encouraged that, "ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable (spiritual) service" (Rom. 12:1). The same apostle, on another occasion, said that he had done this very thing in that, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (2 Tim. 4:6). We need to be unselfishly and entirely consumed by the giving and expressing of ourselves through total obedience to the Master (Heb. 5:9) !

Question 72 : "Is it wrong to be rich ?"

Answer : Many have been brought up under the false concept that being rich or being successful was wrong. Sometimes, jealousy makes wealth wrong when experienced by others.

Money is not the root of evil ! The Bible states that, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (I Tim.6:10). He continued in verses 17-19 to "charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed."

The teaching is that the yearning and strong appetite for wealth has the potential of destroying objectivity and true values. The rich were not told to get rid of their wealth, but to use it properly. Rich Christians were told to "lay hold on the life which is life indeed" while rich. It is God that gives "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). In becoming wealthy, God is often forgotten. While making great strides, make sure God is glorified and not self! The steward is required to "be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2). When God entrusts material wealth to us, regardless of small or great proportions, He requires us to use it to His glory. Jesus taught that it would be difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:23,24), due no doubt to wealth making a man become his own god! Consider the five, two and one talent men of Matt. 25:14-30. In our money, they were given about \$15,000, \$6,000 and \$3,000 respectively. They were told to use it wisely as we are today (I Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:6-8). Our God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) and refuses to have one's possessions become a barrier between man and His God. The love of the Father is not in a

man that loves the world (I Jn. 2:15-17). Real wealth can't be touched by the elements surrounding it (Matt. 6:19)!

Question 73 : "Who is scripturally entitled to remarry when a divorce has occurred ?"

Answer : The need for God's answer becomes more important with each passing day with the escalation of divorce figures in our society. It was a problem in the days of Moses due to the "hardness of your hearts" (Gen. 2:22-24; Matt. 19:3-12). The laws of our land have changed, but God's laws have remained the same. Why are many seeing the issue differently today than three decades ago? Man has changed in his concern and objectivity as to God's attitude about divorce.

Jesus laid down the ground rules for divorce and remarrige- simply stated, one-man-one woman-one life (Matt. 19:4), God's process of leaving and cleaving, becoming one flesh. Marriage is not just peculiar to Christians, but to people. Therefore, God's regulations apply to all mankind.

The basic truth is that God hates putting away. The only exception for not living together in marriage until death, is adultery, sexual unfaithfulness, manifested in the form of incest, homosexuality, bestiality, or adultery (Matt. 5:31,32; 19:9-12). A married person waves his/her rights to remarry if they have been guilty of "putting asunder" that which God has "joined together" without exercising the only exception mentioned-adultery. The seriousness of this matter is that the same sin or wrong is imputed unto the man/woman who marries the product of an unscriptural divorce. They too become an adulterer/adultress (Matt. 5:31,32;19:9). Please note the correction of an adultress condition requires the same treatment for forgiveness as any other sin... repentance or stop doing the sin (Lk. 13:3-5; Acts 2:38) ! This must occur in order to see God, for living in the "state of adultery" forbids

entrance into the kingdom (I Cor. 6:9). Those who have been treated unfaithfully have the right to divorce and to remarry (I Cor. 7), although forgiveness and reconciliation is the best interest of all. Statistics show the second marriages tend to work out poorer than the first. Serious consideration should be given and study of the Bible **before** making drastic marital decisions.

Question 74 : "I know that I am to have faith in God, but I don't understand exactly what all that entails. Help me please."

Answer : The Bible states that, "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Notice that there are two things mentioned in this passage in which we must have faith: Believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who follow and serve Him. First, let's look at some things that faith will allow us to acknowledge and we will then build a contrast with the faithlessness of the Athiest.

Faith will lead us to an awareness of the fact that God is man's **creator** (Gen. 2:7) and that He is **just** in His treatment and judgment of mankind (Isa. 45:20-22). Not only is God just in punishment of sin, but extends to us His **mercy** (Dan. 9:9, 10) because of his genuine **love** for us (I Jn. 4:16). We must have confidence (faith) that God is **unchanging** when making promises (Jas. 1:17), taking no **delight in anyone perishing** (2 Pet. 3:9). Our faith allows us to acknowledge **God as the Father** of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:5-8) as well as those who do His will (I Cor. 8:5,6). Only "through the eye of faith" can we accept God as being **eternal deity** (Ps. 90:1,2), and His existence being in a **spirit** form (Jn. 4:24).

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). God’s word dispels the myths of the athiest replacing it with truth. The athiest asserts that “there is no God” giving way for wrong conclusions which the Bible counters. They believe order of creation was by chance (Gen. 1:1,2); law and design were accidental (Ps. 19:1,2); man is no more than mere animal (Gen. 1:26,27); prayer is unanswered (I Pet. 3:12); there is no salvation (Heb.7:25); no comfort for sorrow (Rev. 7:17); Christ is not the Son of God, but is an imposter (Jn. 14:6); the church is a human institution (Matt. 16:19); the Bible is false (Isa. 55:10,11); and death ends everything with nothing beyond the grave.(I Cor. 15:53,54). Hopelessness reigns and ignorance prevails where there is no faith! Eternity can only be envisioned through magnifying faith!

Question 75 : “What kind of death did God give warning to Adam and Eve in the garden?”

Answer : The passage in question is Gen 2:17, where Adam and Eve were being warned about eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Death was the penalty for sin. It was “through one man that sin entered into the world, and death through sin” (Rom. 5:12). There are two deaths spoken of in the Bible: the death of the body (Jas. 1: 26), and death in sin (Eph. 2:1). Though a person exists does not mean he truly has life. The devil lives, but does not have spiritual life. Man is dead to that with which he is not in union. Death can be defined as “separation” and in the case with Adam, that is what alienated him from God (Isa. 59:2).

As a result of Adam’s sin, death passed on all men (Rom. 5: 12). “In Adam all die” (I Cor. 15:22). The death that is

passed on mankind must be physical, because sin or even righteousness is not genetic or transfereable for the "soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:1-4, 18-20). "For since by one man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (I Cor. 15:21). In this passage, Paul is speaking of the resurrection of the physical body; he must of necessity be speaking, therefore, of a physical death! We are not guilty of Adam's sin, sometimes referred to as the "Adamic sin" which by some is considered to be inherited. And the erroneous conclusion is then drawn that man is "totally depraved" or separated from God because of the sin which Adam committed, more so than our own. This brings on all sorts of doctrinal problems and false teachings for justification purpose. "Infant baptism" is an unscriptural practice spawned by this notion, because if born in sin, there must be needs for a way of removing those "inherrited sins." I challenge anyone to find a scriptural passage even inferring the need for a child to have his sin taken away that was committed by someone else and charged to him. We do not inherit sin, but often the consequences of the sin of others. Physical death is one such consequence!

Question 76 : "Is it wrong to be a businessman and make a profit? Can a Christian be a successful businessman?"

Answer : It is not vulgar to make a profit nor to be aggressive in business as a Christian! When profit or business matters were criticized in the Bible, it was not so much the profession, but how the person responded to success. Certain vocations are wrong in themselves, because of merchandise being peddled or the environment and/or techniques used, but that is not the consideration here.

Jesus taught a parable to clear up the very question being

asked here (Lk.12:16-22). See if he is not saying what Gov. Wm.E. Russel, Mass. said, "It is better to make a life than a living." Jesus maintained and taught the same philosophy (Matt. 6:19-21; 16:24-26). Priorities become a problem if making a living interferes with making a life (Matt. 6:25-34). This businessman was rich (Lk. 6:25-34), which gives power for good (Matt. 27:57). The abnormal "love of money" creates the wrong (I Tim. 6:10). Christians are to share their wealth (Acts 4:36,37). It seems as if he made his money honestly and was successful (Lk. 12:16). "He is a benefactor who can grow two bushels where one did grow." He was a moral, but foolish man!"

His mistake can become our mistake ! He was selfish and expressed such by the use of 12 personal pronouns in just a couple sentences: "my barns," "my fruits," "my goods," "my soul" (Lk. 12:17-19). Seemingly, he did not think of others as a man of God should (Gal. 6:10). Mr. Heinz had it right with his motto: "God first, others second, pickles last." Once an old man said there will be three questions at judgment: "Did you make all you could? How did you make it? How did you use what you made?" The rich man of Luke 12 made the mistake of thinking his soul could be satisfied by material things; "Eat, drink, be merry." Those things perish (Jn.6:27), but how we live in response to those things follow us (Matt. 4:4; Rom. 14:17). When God is left out of our lives, we are in trouble (Ps. 24:1)! He was disillusioned, thinking he had a lease on life, taking his ease. Remember, shrouds have no pockets (Job. 1:21) and only fools leave God out (Ps. 14:1)!

Question 77 : "How can I know that God can do all the things that He claims He can do?"

Answer : A quick glance of God's "track record" serves as

pretty good evidence as to His abilities! The Bible is filled with promises which were delivered, warnings which were meted out, and claims upheld. The story of Elijah and the false prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:20-39) is an example of the abilities of God. All Israel met on Mt. Carmel to witness the dual between the two. An altar was erected with a slain bullock placed upon it. "You can call upon the name of your gods and I will call upon the name of the Lord.... and the God that answereth by fire..... let him be God." When the prophet of the true God performed his test, he dug a trench and poured it full of water and watered down the altar, wood and offering. God proved that He was able! What about Baal? He never showed. The three Hebrew children of Dan. 3 refused to yield to the way of life expected by the king and God again proved that he was able (vs. 16-18). God has promised His presence today for the faithful (Mt. 28:20). The widow whose sons were to be sold to pay her debt were delivered by God, providing in an abundant measure (2 Kings 4:1-7). He was able!

Jesus proved in the New Testament that He could heal the sick, cleanse the leper, make lame to walk, and the dumb to talk. He walked on water, turned water to wine, calmed the trouble sea, fed multitudes from morsels and raised the dead. Jesus was able to withstand Satan when tempted and scored a victory over him by His resurrection (Mt. 4:1-10; Rev. 1:18).

"But, this was in the days of miracles", some say. We know that God doesn't work miracles through men as He once did, but He does work ! He is able to save to the utmost (Heb. 7:25; Mt. 1:21; Lk. 19:10; I Tim. 2:3). He answers scriptural prayers (Eph. 3:20), giving what we ask for and even more. He is able to keep (2 Tim. 1:12), keep us from falling (Jude 24), enables us to give (2Cor. (9:8) and can change our feeble bodies (Phil. 3:29-31). If there is any shortage, it is not God's, but our lack of faith in His ability. An examination of His word

can change that (Rom. 10:17).

Question 78 : “When a person has been unfaithful to God, how can he make his way back to God and find happiness once again?”

Answer : The best answer that I know of is found in Luke 15:17-32. There is the account of the departure and return of the “prodigal son.” In examining the course of his departure and return to his father, which is typical of God and our relationship with him when we depart the body of Christ, the church, we note several common necessary realizations.

This young man made a great discovery—he discovered himself. The Bible said, “And when he came to himself;” which is a discovery that many never make before dying! Sin is a form of insanity where a man is not himself. This young man became like unto an animal. His home could not satisfy some of his animalistic desires and physical delights demanded.

When he realized the condition, he made good resolutions. No man is hopelessly lost who can make good resolutions. This is the first rung on the ladder that leads upward.

He made the necessary surrender, including pride. He said, “I will arise and go to my father.” His shame facilitated his surrender. He said, “I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” He demonstrated true humility which is a necessary condition of exaltation. Self-renunciation was expressed when he said, “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” there was no self-justification nor attempt to negotiate. His shame brought about his repentance as our shame should do to us today (2 Cor. 7:10).

He put his resolutions into practice; he made the journey

home. A person can drift away from God but not drift back to him. It is as impossible as drifting upstream! Effort is required which others can not expend for us. We must not hesitate to do anything the Lord requires of us to do right.

For instruction for the wayward Christian, read: I Jn. 1:7-9; James 4:7,9; 5:16. In order to become a child of God initially, read: Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-39; Jn. 3:3-5; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:26,27. Matt. 5:2-12 gives recipe for true happiness.

Question 79 : "I want to do what is right when I worship God. Can you help me understand whether God wants us to use musical instruments in worship?"

Answer : This is a troublesome issue for many. Let me implore you to deal with this issue as we have with every other issue considered in this article in the past. What does God's word say about it? Keep in mind that the Bible is a book of principles and when the principles are once understood correctly, they assist us with making all our decisions wisely.

Music is divinely authorized by the Lord for worship. We have the burden to find out what kind is authorized, the purpose it serves and the manner in which it is rendered. The New Testament authorizes singing only. Consider these passages and specific expressions: "Sang a hymn" (Matt.26:30); "Prayed and sang" (Acts 16:25); "Sing with the melody" (Eph. 5:19); "Sing with grace in the heart" (Col.3:16); Sing "in the midst of the church" (Heb.2:12); "Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

The command to sing is specific and specific commands are exclusive also! When the ark was built, "Gopher wood" excluded oak and all others (Gen.6:14). "Fruit of the vine" excludes water (Matt. 26:29). "Took bread" excludes cake (Matt. 26:26). "Singing" excludes playing (Eph.5:19). To go

beyond that which is authorized is presumptuous sin (2 Jn. 9).

The New Testament is sufficient in all things and “thoroughly furnishes” (2 Tim.3:16,17) us with “All things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet.1:3). Singing is an expression of the heart (Jas.5:13), designed to praise and express thanksgiving (Heb.13:15; Rom. 15:9), done through the avenue of teaching and admonishing one another (Col. 3:16). Our worship is done “unto God” and is not to be entertainment (Acts 16:25), but done “in spirit” of sincerity and “with the understanding” (I Cor. 14:15). It is to be understood by others and comprised of “Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. (Eph. 5:19).

Question 80 : “Was not instruments of music used in the Old Testament?” (Continued).

Answer : There are several arguments used in an attempt to justify the use of instruments in worship, all without the authority of the scriptures. Let’s strive to answer the objection about which you have question and some others as well, from the Bible.

Instruments were used at times under the law of Moses, but sacrifices, incense and polygamy were as well. Keep in mind, as previously studied, that the Law of Moses was abolished (Col.2:14). If we insist on keeping the law, we are committing spiritual adultery (Rom. 7:1-4) and are severed from Christ by the law and fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). Some conjecture that it is not expressly forbidden. Please note that singing is “expressly” commanded, the “law of exclusion” rules out everything else! Instruments hinder “teaching and admonishing”, being incapable of doing neither. Some infer that their “Christian liberty” allows them to exercise choice. I have yet to find in the Bible where liberty became a license to

do wrong (Gal. 5:13). Others conjecture that there will be instruments of music in heaven. The Bible does not so declare, yet it does say the "voice" heard "as they sung" (Rev. 5:8,9; 14:2, 3). Some try to misuse the Greek by saying "Psallo" means to "pluck, pull or twang." Eph. 5:19 tells us the object of the plucking to be the heart. We are to activate the "strings" of the heart and make melody within. Each heart can perform this whether a good singer or having limited vocal ability.

The use of such severs us from Christ (2 Jn.9), rendering worship vain (Mk. 7:7,8; Col. 3:16). The apostles were guided in all truth (Jn. 16:13) and they commanded us to "sing" (Col. 3: 16). It is not of faith unless it comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17), we cannot justify their use by the New Testament and therefore must keep in mind that, "without faith we cannot please God" (Heb. 11:6) !

Question 81 : "Is it possible to be religiously devout and still be lost?"

Answer : The Bible has much to say about lost religious people who may be religious, but religiously wrong; sincere, but sincerely wrong.

Note with me several people or peoples who were religiously wrong. **Pharisees** (Matt. 23) - Jesus called them a child of hell (v.15). They were lost because they said and did not (v.3), doing their works to be seen of men (v.5). As a result He shut up the kingdom of heaven against them (v.13). They prayed long prayers out of pretense(v.14), omitting the weightier matters of the law (v.23), strained the gnat and swallowed a camel (v.24), outwardly appearing righteous before men but full of hypocrisy within (v.28). **Another Pharisee** (Lk. 18:9-14) - He prayed, fasted, gave tithes and did many other things which were not evil, yet, he was lost because

he trusted in himself that he was righteous (v.9,14; Prov. 3:5). **Saul of Tarsus** (Acts 9,22,26) - Saul was very religious (Phil. 3:4-6), living with a good conscience (Acts 23:1) and a faith that compelled him to want to know what to do (Acts 9:6), penitent to the point of fasting (Acts 9:9). He was still lost (Acts 22:16), because he had not complied with God's law of pardon. **Eunuch** (Acts 8:25-39) - He had been to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27). One may worship unacceptably as must have been his case (Matt. 15:9). He was a scripture-reading man (Acts 8:28) yet lost, because he had not obeyed God's plan for saving him. **Cornelius** (Acts 10) - He was a devout, God fearing man, gave much alms, and prayed to God always (v.2), yet lost; he needed to obey the words of salvation (Acts 11:14). **One talent man** (Matt. 25:14-30) - This man represents some who are in the kingdom or church (v.14), lost because his talents had been buried. **Five foolish virgins** (Matt. 25:1-13) - They portray some in the kingdom or church as well in that they had made initial obedience, but were not ready for they had neglected preparation (v.10). **Laodicean church** (Rev. 3:14-22) - They were lost due to lukewarmness. **Others today** will be rejected in judgment if changes are not made (Matt. 7:21-23).

Question 82 : "Will the good people in all churches be saved?"

Answer : This question is similar to that discussed in this column last week. We must acknowledge the fact that there are "good people" in every religious organization in existence. With all the "religious hoop-la", we begin to wonder if there is a safe place. For this reason, we keep returning to the Bible for our answers. It prevents us from engaging in personal judgment or having to guess, but can know what God expects of us.

If we are to act with divine authority, we must follow the truth taught by Christ (Mt. 7:21-27). God's will was revealed by Him (Mt. 17:5) through the apostles whom he selected, taught and trained (Jn. 16:13). This being true, certain conclusions must follow. Man will not be saved just because he is good. No one is good in the absolute sense (Ecc. 7:20; Rom. 3:10,23). If goodness can save, Christ died in vain, Cornelius was a good, moral man. Why send for Peter to bring saving words if he was acceptable already (Acts 10)?

Man will not be saved because he has faith in Christ alone (Jn.1: 1,12). The gospel is God's power to save the believer, not the unbeliever (Rom. 1:16). Being religious does not save one unless he is right religiously ! In Acts 17 Paul declared to those worshippers in the region of Mars Hill the true God. It takes more than honesty, and sincerity to save one. Paul declared having a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16) while making havoc of the church (Gal. 1:13). There is a way that seems right (Prov. 16:25), usually because of the large number traveling that way (Matt. 7:13,14). We can not plead ignorance to God's will and expect to be saved (Acts 17:24; Rom. 10:1).

His will is that we hear (Acts 18:8); believe (Mk. 16:15,16); repent (Lk. 13:5), confess (Mt. 10:32); be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3,4). It is His will that we worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23,24). This can not be accomplished in just any church. We must be obedient (Heb. 5:8,9) and belong to the church of Christ's choice (Mt. 16:18). There is one body (Eph. 4:4) which is His church (Eph. 1:22,23), His bride (Eph. 5:21-32), purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28).

Question 83 : "Can you give me some specifics as to how a struggling person like me can prove my love for God in an

acceptable way for the many wonderful things done for me?"

Answer : This love that God has for us is impossible to measure, although the cross is an adequate measuring device to help us better understand (Eph. 3:18-20; Jn. 3:16). Even though our minds can not fathom the depth and breadth of His love, we can certainly appreciate it. Think of the scores who live as if there is no God. We know from reading Jn. 14:14 that we must obey His commandments to show our love.

You can show your love for him by **becoming a Christian!** Your heart can be changed through faith (Heb. 11:6; Rom, 10:17); life changed through repentance (Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38); and relationship with God changed through baptism by which we move from being "out of Christ" to "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

In appreciation for this love you can **live a pure life.** The happy ones in the world are the pure in heart.....for this "they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). This act makes Christ become our very life (Col. 3:4). When a person has been purified by this obedience, the "fruit of the Spirit" can grow in this pure life, being, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. . . ." (Gal. 5:22,23).

When this good news (gospel) has been learned, obeyed and demonstrated through a pure lifestyle, this love for God must be **shared with others.** If those who have obeyed the story of Christ do not tell it, it will go untold. "The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30). God's plan is simple - one who has been taught teaches another who teaches another, etc. (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul had the right idea when he stated, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). If we live right, then we can die right!. Christ is complimented when we mimick Him. He must be our supreme example. We must, therefore, look to Him as the author and finisher of our faith and remain faithful

to our commitment to receive a crown of life. (Heb. 12:2; Rev. 2:10).

Question 84 : "What is the difference between soul and spirit?"

Answer : People today normally use these terms interchangeably although the scriptures draw a distinction between the two. The Bible speaks about the "dividing of the soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12).

The word "spirit" comes from the Greek word **pneuma**. It designates the part of us that is not susceptible to death (Acts 7:59). It is not a product of human generation, but infused in us directly from God (Heb. 12:9). The term "soul" has its derivation from the Greek word **psuche**, its meaning largely being determined from its context since it is a generic word. Soul is used in four different ways in the scriptures: Used as a synonym for person or people (Acts 2:41; I Pet. 3:20). It is used in reference to the animal life as that possessed by the beast of the field; physical life (Ps. 78: 50). The terminology of I Cor. 12:14 mentions the "natural man" which is actually translated, "The soulish man" or the physical. The natural man is being contrasted with the higher spiritual natured man (I Cor. 1:18-28; 2:6-16). "Soul" is also used for the never-dying spirit, void of physical decay or destruction (Acts 2:27). This usage signifies the immortal nature, the same which the Lord possessed which was not to undergo death.

Some try to prove that "the soul never dies," then they produce numerous Old Testament passages stating that the soul does indeed die. They then conclude that man is wholly mortal and his entire being is subject to death. The problem occurs when a specific meaning is given to a generic term and false conclusions resulting. The spirit of man is not subject to

death (Gen. 25:8;35:18; Ps. 90:10; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6-8). When the spirit leaves the body, death is constituted (James 2:26). When death occurs it does destroy the soul when used in reference to physical life and breath (Ps. 78:50)), but the never-dying "psuche" or soul is separated from the body and goes to be with God in the form of a spirit (Acts 2:27). "...corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:54).

Question 85 : "Should Christians observe Easter?"

Answer : "Easter" appears only one time in the scriptures and it was poorly translated by King James translators from the more accurate word, "passover" (Acts 12:4). Modern observance represents a convergence of three traditions: The Hebrew Passover, celebrated during Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew lunar calendar; The commemoration of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which took place at the feast of the passover; The Norse Ostara or Eostra, from which comes "Easter". It was a *pagan festival* of spring which fell at the vernal equinox, March 21. Prominent symbols in this celebration of the resurrection of nature after the winter were rabbits, signifying fecundity (excessively fertile), and eggs, coloured like the rays of the returning sun and the northern lights, or aurora borealis. The date for Easter was set by the Council of Nicaea 325 AD. It decreed that the resurrection would be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox (Layman's Bible Ency.) This is well and good, but not Bible!

Our Lord does not honor pagan festivals, but he does instruct Christians to commemorate His death regularly with the observance of the Lord's supper. He said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's

death till he come" (I Cor. 11:26). It was to be done upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Paul criticized the Galatians and questioned why, "turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years (Gal. 4:9,10). The great expression of love performed by the death and resurrection of Jesus is borne daily by those who have been baptized into Christ. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3,4). Am I disrespectful for not observing a "pagan festival" or refuse to acknowledge the death and resurrection of Jesus? Quite the contrary! It must be a daily observance, not just an annual event.

Question 86 : "Since we are living in such a rapid changing world do we not have to change our interpretation of scripture to be current with the times?"

Answer : Only if you are a fool ! True it is that the "winds of change are blowing" in our day. With all the changes there must be something stable amidst it all. Some efforts have been put forth to change the gospel. We must understand that human nature does not change. Man has basic needs and weaknesses, ironically, the same as characterized folks 1900 years ago. The gospel was given by an omniscient God (all knowing) who was able to deal with current needs as well as anticipate future needs. Religionists have changed the Bible to God's dissatisfaction (Mark 7:7,8) by perverting it (Gal. 1:6,7). The need for today is not a "new message", but to obey the one we have. It is easier to adjust your car seat to make room for an oversized stomach than it is to lose weight in order to fit. Some reason the same way with the Bible. Change it, but don't mess with altering my lifestyle!

God forbids changing the Bible (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:16,17). It is thoroughly adequate (2 Tim. 3:16,17). This gospel saved those on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41); reconciled the Corinthians (Acts 18:8; I Cor. 6:11; 15:2). Every believer is saved by the same gospel, which touches our lives today as well (Mark 16:15,16). The vilest sinner can be transformed into the purest person in God's sight by the word (Jn.17:17). James and John (sons of thunder) were transformed (Mark 3:17). Saul (Chief of sinners), was changed (I Tim. 1:15). The gospel message is universal enough to save the vilest today (Rom. 1:16). Since human needs have not changed and sin does not change (Gal. 5:19-21; Jas. 1:13-15), why change the source of cure? The gospel was once delivered for all (Jude 3: Gal. 1:6-9)!

The burden that we have is to modify our lives and will to be compatible with that relevant guide we call the Bible (Rom. 12:1,2). Those who would tamper with the word of God are not fully conscious of what they are doing. God's curse or "anathema" is upon anyone who would alter the word (Gal. 1:6-9) and sever themselves from God (2 Jn. 9-11). Obey it as it is and watch life become sweeter and your future more hopeful.

Question 87 : "How is the husband the head of the wife?"

Answer : Most often, only a portion of the passage to which reference is being made is quoted, "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). When reading the following verses, one can readily see that more is expected. "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also in the head of the church.....Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.... Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies" (v.23,25,28). The rule which Jesus manifested for the

church was not arbitrary; Christ is head of the church, such headship being based on love which He demonstrated in that "He gave himself up for it" (v.25). The husband that loves his wife, as Christ loves His church, will not be selfish but seek happiness and welfare of his wife, His every effort will be to benefit her, just as Christ was dedicated to caring for the church. It is not difficult for a wife to submit to a husband who loves and cares for her in this manner !

The, "I'm the boss," idea is not to be found in the Bible. Great tension, strife and disrespect will prevail when such is the case. Every husband needs to remember that his wife is also made in the image of God, and as a Christian, is equal in every respect to him or any other Christian (Gal. 3:27-29). The woman has an obligation as well to not demand to be loved. Her love, loyalty and demeanor should ever so naturally and wonderfully extract it from him. Just because husbands and wives are characterized as having different roles, does not in any way mean that one is superior to the other. The husband should always "give honor unto the wife as the weaker vessel" (I Pet. 3:7). He will strive to demonstrate his loving concern for her good at all times. Subjection "to her husband in everything" will be easier when being privileged to live with such a calibre of person (Eph. 5:24). Good advice for both husband and wife is that you, "Consider one another, to provoke unto love....Let all you do be done in love" (Heb. 10:24; I Cor. 16:14).

Question 88 : "How are Christians to respond to the use of Pornographic books and movies?"

Answer : The lack of response concerns me more today than the response! There is absolutely no correlation or relationship between the Christian and such material. The

sincere Christian is going to be seeking and acquiring as many lifebuilding resources as possible. Sexually explicit or tainted viewing can only hold a person of God back and deny their spiritual growth! The Christian must oppose it militantly!

The Christian's priority and placement of affection is given by Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). We are created by God to never become "immune" to being affected by the opposite sex. This instinctive attraction does not license promiscuity or perversion. God gave an avenue (marriage) for controlling the passion which causes one to "burn" inside, resulting in either mental and/or physical fornication, the engagement in illicit sexual activity (I Cor. 7:2,9). Only a fool would throw fuel onto an already volatile passion, causing it to flare up into an inferno consuming the soul and rendering the body impure. Regardless of what one says, he can not look at such without being sexually charged!

Jesus taught, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). He used this in the context of discussing the body being cast into hell! The reverse of this is true as well, a woman toward a man.

How can a Christian entertain the practice of paying money at the movie to look at a naked body want only to which they are not entitled, or peer at a centerfold droolingly without having misplaced affections? The same thing can be accomplished by the reading of steamy, cheap novels with graphic sexual vernacular. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov.23:7). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34-35). What is your heart saying?

Question 89 : "Mike, can you help me in knowing with which church to be identified?"

Answer : Contrary to the feelings of many, the church is important and it does make a difference to which one we belong! I do want to point you to the scriptures to find the answer and not to listen to me or anyone else. That is the source of conflict from the beginning (Matt. 15:9). In a telephone conversation moments ago, a young gentleman tried to tell me that the church was not important, but how much love one has for the Lord. I beg to differ with him because of the teaching of the scriptures (Jn. 14:15; Matt. 7:21), the Bible teaches that the church is the avenue through which we glorify God (Eph. 3:21) and through which the mission of the Lord is to be executed (Eph. 3:10).

Look for an organization that is undenominational, because denominationalism is man-made and divisive (I Cor. 1:10). Make sure that you can read about it in the Bible (Rom. 16:16) and does not have the name of some person affixed to it. The creed, "that which I believe", must be that Christ is God's Son (Matt. 16:16). The church which belongs to Christ will be happy to recognize Jesus Christ as its only founder and head (Matt. 16:16). The church which is true to the Bible teaches the same plan of salvation which the apostles taught (Mk. 16:15-16). This body will support its work by free-will offerings of its members and not carnivals, bake sales, garage sales, etc. (I Cor. 16:1-2). The worship and praise will be extended to God according to the New Testament pattern, which include: singing, praying, preaching, giving observation of Lord's supper and fellowship (Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). This church will be a great advocate of the Bible only-with no man made creed or discipline (2 Jn.9). It will be organized according to the word of God with elders (or bishops) as the rulers, with preachers, deacons and members

in subjection to them without bearing titles or being exalted above the membership (Matt. 23:9; I Tim. 3; Titus 1; I Pet. 5; Phil. 1:1).

Question 90 : “What does it actually mean for Christ to ‘intercede for us’?”

Answer : Your question comes from Heb. 7:25, “seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them”. “Intercession” is defined as, “prayer, petition, or entreaty in favor of another” (Webster). Throughout the book of Hebrews, Jesus is called our High Priest, one who can be touched by “the feelings of our infirmities.....unchangeable.....over the house of God” (Heb. 3:1; 4:15; 7:24; 10:21).

The principle duty of a high priest under the Old Testament was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people and thus to intercede to God for them (Heb. 9:1-7; I Tim. 2:5). “But Christ having come high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11-12). Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself to die on the cross, offering sacrifice for us as High Priest.

Despite our efforts, we are still sinful, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (I Jn. 1:8-10). If we sin, we find Jesus serving as our Advocate “to plead in favor of support” (I Jn. 2:2). Jesus is very much alive and intercedes for us as our advocate. Jesus lived on the earth and suffered everything that we suffer and tempted in all areas as we are (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Since He “ever lives to make intercession for us”, we should be “Casting all our cares on him, for he careth for you” (I Pet. 5:7).

His ability and authority came from God by delegation (Matt. 28:18), administered through His blood wherein justification is realized (Rom. 5:8-10). The price of having a Redeemer was the "precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (I Pet, 1:19). He is the "umbilical cord" between sinful man and a holy God. We need to become Christians and let him "work for us" that we might have access to a home with God in heaven (Eph. 1:3-7; Heb. 9:11-22; 10:1-4).

Question 91 : "What do you think is ahead of us and how can we best prepare for it?"

Answer : If you were to listen to the alarmist, he would tell you that we shall be fried due to a hole in the ozone layer, nuclear war, World War III with Russia, the nation wiped out due to AIDS, etc. It would be easy to "major in the minors" by over reacting to these. Yes they are important and serious, but not most threatening or important! In the midst of all this mess, let us not allow our thinking to be too limited and fail to consider **THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS AHEAD**. What **IS** ahead of us, and what can we do about it?

DEATH IS AHEAD! Each and every individual must meet an appointment with death and it can't be escaped unless Christ comes first (Heb. 9:27).

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IS AHEAD! At what moment the shout of the coming Christ, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall be heard, we do not know! But this we do know - some time ahead, they shall be (I Thess. 4:13-17).

THE JUDGMENT IS AHEAD! Each one of us shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to our works (Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

HEAVEN IS AHEAD! The faithful citizens of the

kingdom of Christ shall be delivered by their King to the Father in heaven (I Cor. 15:22-24).

HELL IS AHEAD! All sinners shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 25:41-46).

What can you and I do about that which is ahead? Believe in Christ; repent of sins; confess our faith in Christ; be buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk a new life of abounding and faithful service in the church of Christ (Jn. 8:24; LK. 13:3; Rom. 10:9,10; MK. 16:16; Rom. 6:3,4,17,18; I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). "Today is the day of salvation," therefore, why do we delay until time is no more and we can have only a dismal view that which is ahead (2 Cor. 6:2)?

Question 92 : "Did the Holy Spirit provide the actual words for the writers of the Bible or just the thought expressed in their own words?"

Answer : We can understand from the scriptures that, "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21).

From the following considerations it will be seen that the Holy Spirit selected the very words which inspired men used:

(1). On no other ground can some of the statements in the Bible be explained. It is expressly stated that the apostles "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The Holy Spirit not only produced the idea, but gave utterance to the idea. "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (I Cor. 2:13). This plainly declares that the inspired men did not rely on their own wisdom to select words, but used such words as the Holy Spirit taught them.

(2). Inspired men frequently spoke and wrote things

which they themselves did not understand, "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42:3). When the Holy Spirit said through Peter, "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2:39), Peter did not fully understand what was meant. The prophets sometimes searched diligently trying to find the meaning of their own words (I Pet. 1:10,11). It is a certain fact that one cannot select words and frame a sentence to express a thought which he does not understand (Gal. 1:11).

(3). Inspired men frequently spake in languages which they did not understand. In such instance it was utterly impossible for them to select the words (Acts 2:6). More than 2,000 times do the scriptures inform us they were issued from God (2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 1:6-9; Jn. 17:8; MK. 13:11).

These words are divine and must not be tampered with or modifications made to God's available instruction already given (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Gal. 1:8,9). It is from God !

Question 93 : "All my life I have heard the expression, 'the humiliation of Christ.' What does that mean?"

Answer : It has been said, "The first miracle in Jesus' life was life itself." God became man in the flesh in Jerusalem. His mission was to come to the earth to suffer and die for the sins of the world (Lk. 9:21-22). To do so voluntarily would certainly be an act of "humiliation." Jesus believed that "The way up is down." You see, Jesus was a Prince, while with the Father in heaven before coming to the earth (Jn.1:1,14).

Jesus was **divested of glory** in losing all His heavenly possessions. He emptied himself that we might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9; Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 2:2). When we lose our soul, we have lost everything (Mt. 16:26). He **descended** (came down), leaving heaven, which is contrary to man who wants to climb (Lk.

19:10; Mt. 10: 39). He assumed the form of man, flesh blood and bone (Jn.1:14) following a humble birth (Lk. 2:7). being made a "little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9) because God loved us (Jn. 3:16). "He made himself of no reputation" (Phil.2:7), but assumed poverty (I Cor. 1:26). Is it true that "Few of us are *big* enough to become *little* enough to be used of God"? He took upon himself "our nature" through sufferings and distresses of life, which is fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 53:7-12). This was expressed in His prayer just before His death (Lk. 22:42-46). A part of this nature was becoming a servant. He came to minister (MK. 10:45) which He proved and demonstrated rather adequately in His life (Jn.13: 12-16). The greatest expression of humility is that He became a "Lamb" (Acts 8:32-33), suffering physical pain upon a Roman cross.

The lesson for us to learn is that, God exalts those who *humble* themselves in His sight (I Pet. 5:6). Jesus has manifested His love for us and His willingness to obey the Father. Are we willing to dethrone self and enthrone Christ? The scriptures demand that we confess Christ and be baptized in order to have our past sins removed (Acts 2:38). We have the promise of being with God and Christ in heaven if willing to live a life of faithfulness. (Rev. 2:10).

Question 94 : "Is it wrong to eat meat of strangled animals and blood?"

Answer : The scriptures, from both Old and New Testaments forbid the eating of blood and/or animals that have been killed but not properly bled. There was a discussion regarding the Gentile Christians and matters about which they needed more teaching and warning (Acts 15:6-29). There were four basic things that would seem to affect their lives in service to Christ adversely and from which they were to abstain: (1)

things sacrificed to idols; (2) blood; (3) things strangled; and (4) fornication (v.29).

The Jews did not require this same instruction since they had always had these prohibitions as a part of their laws. In every period of measuring time and giving laws, God has always forbidden the eating of blood. As early as Gen. 9 it has been forbidden, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given you all. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. 9:3,4). To the people before Noah's day and before Moses and the law it was forbidden and rigidly followed in the Jewish economy. "Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood (Lev. 17:10-12). The hunters of gazelle and hart were to, "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou shalt pour it out upon the earth as water" (Deut. 12 : 22-24). The seriousness of the violation is emphasized by its being mentioned with pollution of idols and fornication !

Food dishes containing blood and things strangled, such as fowl, game, cattle, etc., killed by strangulation or some other method not allowing the blood to flow from the body would violate the above mentioned edict. Under the law of Moses, God ruled that those violating His instruction regarding the eating of blood should be "cut off from the people,"-sentenced to death (Lev. 17:14). If God looked with such disfavour on this practice in earlier dispensations, even "sorer punishment" awaits those today (I Sam. 14:32,33).

Question 95 : "What is the 'second death' spoken of in the Bible?"

Answer : The passages to which you are making reference are found in Rev. 2:11; 20:14. Other mention is made in several other passages. The Bible teaches that, "It is appointed unto

men once to die, but after this the judgment ” (Heb. 9:27). This does not necessarily mean that man **MUST** die even once, for those who are changed when the Lord comes will not die. The emphasis is that “He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11). But what is it? “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev. 20:14). Being cast into the “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.....is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

What is so threatening is that those who were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone did not die nor realize freedom from their pain and agony. It is spoken of as. “fire that never shall be quenched: Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (MK. 9:43,44). You see, death means, “separation”. When we die physically, we are separated from the earth, loved ones, etc. When we are cast into the “second death”, we are separated from God and the righteous. The Bible teaches that, “Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14). The two greatest enemies of man are going to be positioned in the lake of fire, into which the wicked will be cast. It does not mean that one will be “killed” to live no more, but that he will be separated for ever and ever, eternally punished, and just like the worm, “dieth not” though he might wish he could. Perpetual, eternal, writhing in pain and anguish, separated from the marvelous presence of God because of sins which separated him from his God while living on the earth (Isa. 59:2). There are two major separations, the physical from the earth (providing the Lord doesn’t come first), alienation from God in the lake of fire that is not quenched. The dead are raised, and the wicked are cast **ALIVE** in the lake, this lake being the second death. Anyone within their right mind would do everything within their power to avoid it while he can! (2 Cor. 6:2).