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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass, the grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever."

Grass, when it is green looks pretty; and flowers in their different colours and forms also look beautiful. But grass and flowers are destined to wither, die and fall away. So is man destined to return to earth from where he was created. (Genesis 2:7 & 3:19). Moses prayed, "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may gain the heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:10,12). Every year when we enter into a new year we do not know if this will be the last year of our existence on earth. More than anything else we need the wisdom to so live our life on earth that we may be acceptable to God in His kingdom. Jesus Christ did not die on the cross until He was thirty-three years of age. Even though He had come on earth from heaven to give Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, to propitiate for our sins. God let Him live that long so that He could be our example in living acceptable lives to God. (1 Peter 2:21). Just as God had a purpose in the life of Jesus Christ on earth; so does God look in us for something He has created us for. Christ taught, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify

your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

Just as food products and medicines contain expiration date, man also has an expiration date. Only God's word has no expiry date, as Peter says in his letter, in 1 Peter 1:24,25. God's written word in the Bible is eternally true, yesterday, today and tomorrow. What it taught people in the first century, it has the same unchanged message for us today. What the inspired word of God taught people in the first century, when the apostles lived and taught regarding God, Christ, God's plan for man's salvation from sin, His church, true worship of God, heaven and hell and eternity, it teaches the same to us in this age also. What people were required in the first century to believe and practice to please God, the same is required from people today. And when all is over and the day of judgment come all people will be judged by the same word of God. (John 12:48; Acts 17:30,31).

Not only the word of the Lord will endure forever, but the Bible also teaches that those who do God's will or live by doing those things which God has revealed for man in His book, the Bible, will live or abide forever. The apostle John exhorted: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17). This does not mean, however, that only those who live by doing God's will will abide forever, and those who do not do God's will on earth will cease to exist in the world to come in eternity. But it does mean that those who do God's will on earth will live with Him in heaven. Both the righteous, who do God's will, and the unrighteous, who do not do God's will will exist or live forever, as Christ taught in Matthew 25:46: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment," that is, those who do not follow God's will, "but the righteous into eternal life." There is the everlasting punishment in hell, as there is also the eternal life with God in heaven. We will certainly not live on earth forever, but we can choose to live with God in heaven forever, where there will be no tomorrow or another year, but one eternal day!

The Church That Jesus Built

J.C. CHOATE

We know that there are many churches in the world today, but we are not going to spend our time in discussing all of those different religious groups. Rather, we want to go back to Bible and learn of the church that Jesus built. If we can get a clear picture of that church, and of its true identity, then surely we will be able to know the kind of church that the Lord would have us to be members of today.

First of all, let us understand that the scriptures will give us all of the information that we need about Christ's church. It will tell us who built the church, what its foundation was, where it began, the name by which it was known, the head of it, the saviour of it, its purchase price, terms of membership, its organization, worship, work, and so on.

So let us begin by turning to Matthew 16:17-19. After Peter and the apostles had confessed Christ as the Son of God, then we read, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Now you will notice here that Christ states clearly that he would build his church. He was going to build but one, and it would be his.

Next, while we are dealing with Matthew 16:17-19 let us see what the foundation of the church was going to be. As already noted, Peter and the apostles had confessed Christ to be the Son of God. Then Christ responded by saying that upon that rock, or upon the confession that he was the Son of God, that he would build his church. The church therefore was not going to be built on Peter, but upon Christ, and that is what it rests on up to this day. There are many number of other passages of scripture that confirm this, but please hear the words of Paul when he said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

(1 Corinthians 3:11). Can there be any doubt then as to what the foundation was ? Surely not.

Now we will proceed to the next question, and that is, where did the church have its beginning ? To answer that question we need to be aware of the fact that it is necessary to read through the New Testament so that the beginning of the church can be pinpointed to a particular place and time. In reading the first four books, then any time the church or kingdom is spoken of, it is always said to be in existence. That means then that the Book of Acts will reveal to us both where the church had its beginning, and when it was established. First, after the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, and just before his return to the Father in heaven, he commanded his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15, 16). He further stated that they should remain in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high, and then they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and finally to all the world. (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). Then on turning to Acts 2 we find the apostles in Jerusalem, it is the day of Pentecost, a Jewish feast day that brought Jews to Jerusalem from all parts of the world, and it was on that day that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and they began to speak in other languages, and they preached the gospel to the people that were there. As a result of all of this, some three thousand souls gladly received the word and were baptized and the Lord added the saved to his church. So here in the city of Jerusalem we have the beginning of the church. Whose church was it? It was Christ's church, or the church of Christ, the church that Christ promised to build, the church that belongs to Christ.

Since we know now where the church had its beginning, we should be able to determine when it began. According to the setting in Acts 2, being on the day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem, then historians tell us that this took place in approximately A.D. 33. That means then that any church that came into existence before that time, could not be the Lord's church. It also means that of all those churches that have come into existence hundreds of years later, that they are much too young to be Christ's church. To be the scriptural church then it had to be established by Christ in the right place and at the right time.

With Christ being the founder and owner, then naturally it

would wear his name. Although it began in Jerusalem, it spread throughout the world. Congregations of that one church sprang up everywhere. All of them wore the Lord's name. That is why we have Paul speaking churches of Christ in Romans 16:16. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 he was speaking of the body of Christ, but when you understand that the body is the church and the church is the body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23), then you know that he is talking about the church of Christ. If Christ built the church, and it belongs to him, then what other name would it wear? Even its members wear the name of Christ, being called Christians. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16). We are told that salvation is in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12) and that we are to do all things in that name. (Colossians 3:17).

In Ephesians 5:23, and several other verses of scripture, We are told that Christ is head of the church. He is also said to be the saviour of it, having died for it, and thus purchasing it with his own blood. (Ephesians 5:23, 27; Acts 20:28).

Now the question comes as to how to enter it, or what the terms of its membership would be. Christ simply commanded the apostles to take the gospel to all the world and to tell each individual that if he would believe and be baptized that he could be saved. Peter and the apostles told the people on the day of Pentecost, after they had become believers, that they should repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Then on doing this the record says that the Lord added the saved to the church. (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:41, 47).

Then the Lord would have each congregation to have its own elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1), preachers and teachers (2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 28:19, 20), worship God on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7), preach the gospel to all of mankind and engage in good works. (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Now this is the church that we read about in God's word and that church exists today just as it existed in the beginning. The word of God gives all of the marks of identification of the church and anywhere in the world where the Bible is preached, and there are people there who will believe it and obey it, then the Lord's church, will exist there.

Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works

(Part 2)

THOMAS R. DOHLING

In 1 Corinthians: 3:6-15, Paul says: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow. So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are united, but each will receive his reward according to his work. We are coworkers belonging to God. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master-builder I laid a foundation, but someone else builds on it. And each one must be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than what is being laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each builder's work will be plainly seen, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will test what kind of work each has done. If what someone has built survives, he will receive a reward. If someone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

The apostle Paul says to Titus the evangelist in Titus 3:14: "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." (Here is another way that our people can learn to engage in good works to meet pressing needs and so not be unfruitful.) By engaging in good works, Christians meet the pressing needs of all and are fruitful for Christ.

Romans 6:22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Philippians 1:11: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (1:9-11 - I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.)

Finally, Colossians 1:10: "That ye might walk worthy of the

Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

(1:9-12 For this reason we also, from the day we heard, have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may *live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects: bearing fruit in every good deed*, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, with joy giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.)

Christians are called to bear fruit in every good work; they need to be salt and light of the world. Remember, our Lord said in Matthew 5:16 "let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven."

Things Which Keep People From Believing

CLIFFORD DIXON

Even though the gospel is preached to many people over and over again, some still will not accept it. The reason is that many do not believe. There are certain things that keep people from believing the truth which would make them "free" (John 8:32).

1. Some do not believe because they have not the word of God abiding in them. Jesus said, "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not" (John 5:38). God's word does not abide in people because they let other things take its place in their lives. Everything else has the priority. The television gets hours of attention every day, while God's book gathers dust upon the shelf. The Bible is "the lamp to our feet, and the light of our path" (Psalm 119:105). We need a revival of interest back to that which enlightens our path.

2. Some do not believe because they search the scriptures with the wrong purpose in mind. The unbelieving Jews thought eternal life was in the Old Testament (John 5:39). How sadly mistaken they were! The Old Testament testifies of the coming

Christ, as Saviour, but they were rejecting him. Many of our day search the scriptures to prove a pre-adopted creed. By "scrapping" verses of the scriptures we could prove (?) any doctrine. We must take the scriptures within their context if we arrive at the proper understanding of them.

3. Some do not believe because they refuse to come to Christ. Christ said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). As in that day, so in ours: instead of going to Christ, many people expect Christ to come to them in some miraculous way. Christ has given a tender invitation for all to come to him (Matthew 11:28-30). He has given plain instructions in his gospel that men need to believe on him, repent of their sins, confess him, and be baptized to be saved (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16). Yet, so many go to an altar and ask the Lord to come to them and save them, or wait for some still small voice. This is what they have been taught (by the preachers and philosophers of the day) to expect. All the pleadings of the Lord through the simple gospel fall on deaf ears. Remember the gospel is the power of God to save men (Romans 1:16). Faith is produced by hearing the word, and not by praying (Romans 10:17).

4. Some do not believe because they have not the love of God in them (John 5:42). Love of the world has taken the place of the love of God (1 John 2:15-16). Things of this world only leave us empty and unprepared to meet God. God has provided all blessings we enjoy (James 1:17), which ought to compel us to be thankful to him and to love him for his gifts. The law taught, "Thou shalt love the Lord God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37). All men ought to love God because he loves us, and commends his love to us by sending Christ to die that we might be saved (Romans 5:8). If we could only get people to see from whence their blessings flow, they would be in a better position to believe.

5. Men do not believe because they give too much honor to men, and not enough honor to God. Jesus told the unbelievers of his day, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). People wanting honor from one another excel in their sports, work, or other activities to please their fellow men. If we want honor from God, we should excel in serving him and in obeying him. Worship, study, and personal evangelism would be pleasures, because we

would be seeking to please God. Many of Jesus' day believed he was the Christ, but refused to confess him, lest they be put out of the synagogue. "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Here is the reason people are so prone to jump on the bandwagon of the most popular fad, rather than to accept the simple truth of the gospel. The gospel does not have the glamour, and does not receive the popular applause. One obeying the New Testament gospel, and living the Christian life, will be talked about and ridiculed. This does not appeal to people seeking the honor of men.

Who is the true believer? The good soil who "in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). Faith is produced in the one who hears the word (Romans 10:17). Obedience to the terms of salvation is what is meant by "keeping the word" (I Peter 1:22-23). Fruit that is produced is both righteousness, good being done to others, and souls being won to the Lord (John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:22,23; Galatians 6:9,10; James 1:27).

The Position And The Posture Of The Christian

WINFRED CLARK

I heard a man make a statement about the "posture" of the Christian. I know he was not talking about one's sitting in a chair, or standing erect. As you read your Bible you will find passages that deal with position, and posture, as it relates to Christ. Take for example the phrase, "in Christ." Does that not tell you WHERE one is in relation to the world and salvation? Over and over Paul used this phrase in the Ephesian letter. We know what it means to be "in school," or "in the army." That means we are occupied with certain responsibilities. It means we are concerned about a certain way of life. Being "in Christ" carries with it the idea that we are separated from the world, and that we are not of the world. Oh yes, one may live in some town or community in the world; but his manner of life is not like those around him. His habits and hopes differ. Take a moment to glance at Ephesians 4-5. Again and again

you will find Paul talking about "walking." He would have them "walk worthy" (Ephesians 4:1). That means live in keeping with the high calling of the gospel. They are called upon to "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2). This as a way of setting the tone to one's life. It keeps him alert to the tremendous responsibilities shared by Christians.

As Paul comes to the last chapter of this book he talks about "standing." That means an unflinching stand. There is to be no wavering in the face of the enemy. One must put on the whole armor of God to be able to do this, according to Ephesians 6:10-18. This carries with it the idea that one might have to fight. He may have to oppose some things; but that is a part of the posture of the Christian.

One posture described in this letter, found in Ephesians 3:14, is the "bowing of the knee." This will help the Christian to maintain the posture that is his in relation to the world and all that is about him. This is the position from which he can arise to meet his responsibilities.

Is Interpretation Of Scriptures The Reason For Not Seeing The Bible Alike

BOB DANKLEFSEN

Many have wondered why people who supposedly belong to God are divided in their religious beliefs. Often the statement is made that the reason behind the division is interpretation of the scriptures.

Upon investigation of the Bible we actually find that the Bible interprets itself. Even those who were the writers did not voice their own opinions, 2 Peter 1:20,21. Here it states, "Knowing this first, that NO prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." This certainly confirms that the Lord gave us in written form exactly what He wants us to know. Further, He states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God

may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Since God's Word is written as He wants it and is designed to correct those not following it properly, would it not be understandable that all will come to a single united conclusion especially in the area of salvation.

We also must realize that God cannot lie, Titus 1:2. When He says that He is not the author of confusion, 1 Corinthians 14:33 and that He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Peter 1:3, we must accept His Word without reservation.

WHY DO SOME INSIST THAT THE PROBLEM IS INTERPRETATION?

Some believe that God is incapable of expressing Himself in the Bible so that all would come to understand His will. As one looks at the subject of salvation, however, God has stated very clearly that He does not want man to miss it, 1 Timothy 2:4. Paul writes, "who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." The key seems to be in the word "truth." Jesus said, "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth," John 17:17. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," 8:32. The scriptures tell us that those who would come to Him must not only know the truth but must love and believe it, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-14, and obey it, 1 Peter 1:22,23. Thus in order to be free from sin, one must obey the truth. This is so clear in scriptures that no one should say that they interpret this to mean that one can disobey the commands of God when referring to scriptures on salvation.

INTERPRETING GOD'S GOSPEL

The best way to clarify Bible interpretation is to give examples from scripture and how some claim to interpret plain passages. Let us start with creation itself.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1. Is the stand taken by atheists that the universe began through a mindless, chance accident of particles in space an interpretation of this verse or a rejection of it? One can very easily see that it is a rejection of the Creator. A preconceived doctrine of men has caused men to refuse to believe that there is a God who created the cosmos.

Some of those who believe in a Supreme Being have come to different conclusions as to the characteristics of God's nature. For example, Jesus' own statement, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth," John 4:24. This verse coupled with "God is not a man, that He should lie," Numbers 23:19 and Psalm 90:2 showing the eternal nature of God should cause one to conclude that the Lord is an eternal Spirit Being totally different than His creation, man. Yet there is a group that makes the following claim about God, "God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man. . . ." (*The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* by Joseph Fielding Smith), page 345. Also, *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22 says, "The Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's . . ." Once again, this teaching does not originate with the author of the Bible; rather it contradicts it.

The descriptive characteristics of Jesus have varied in the writings of man. One group claims Jesus did not preexist the virgin birth, another says, Jesus should not be called God, and another that He never resurrected bodily. Note the following scriptures to see if the conclusions are interpretations. John 17:5; Hebrews 1:8,9; John 2:19-21.

The Lord's true gospel consists of the good news that Jesus left heaven to become a man, 1 Timothy 3:16; that He died for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:2; and He was resurrected the third day, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. He then ascended back to heaven where He now intercedes for Christians, Hebrews 7:25. Someday He will return just as He went into heaven, Acts 1:9-11.

OTHER GOSPELS WOULD BE TAUGHT

Paul stated that other gospels would be taught, Galatians 1:6 and to follow them would bring a retaliation from God, verse 8. In 2 Corinthians 11:4 Paul states, "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit, which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it." He says a few verses later that these are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ, verse 13.

One might ask, "Since they use the same Bible and use scriptures to prove their conclusions, why is there so much division?" I just concluded reading a tract expressing that Jesus did not preexist the virgin birth. Their whole case was built upon the

fact that God the Father annointed the Son and therefore He could not be a part of the Godhead, because this would make Him equal with God. *Did Jesus Pre-Exist His Birth*, page 2 by Z. B. Duncan. It is interesting that this author looked up many scriptures teaching Jesus was God's Son, yet intentionally avoided all references to His Deity. Note the following scriptures which were avoided by the author: Colossians 1:15, 16; 2:9; Philippians 2:5-10; John 20:28; Isaiah 9:6. There has been in every discussion I have experienced an avoidance of certain scriptures and an appeal to other scriptures to cancel the teachings of those with which they disagree. In addition to this each group doing this puts out either tracts or a manual to help their followers wrongly divide the word, Matthew 15:9.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Since the Lord wants no one to perish and all to find salvation, certainly He will make it clear in his word. What was taught to those who were lost? Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, Mark 16:15. Peter did that very thing on the first day the church came into existance, Acts 2:22-24. He accused those present of killing the Christ and then assured them it was God's plan all along for him to die for the sins of the people, 1 Peter 2:21-24. After hearing of Jesus' resurrection, the people asked what they must do, Acts 2:37. This same question was asked by the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:30. Paul replied to the jailer in verse 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household." What did the jailer have to believe about Jesus? Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God to salvation, Romans 1:16. Therefore, the gospel had to be taught to both the jailer and his family, Acts 16:32. Thus, hearing and believing the gospel is essential to salvation, 1 Corinthians 15:1,2.

Look at the following statement and see if you believe that it is an interpretation of the above verses. "A person may say that he believes in salvation by grace, but if he sets forth any act of man's will, such as repentance, faith, baptism, or hearing the gospel, as a condition for obtaining it, then this position must be put on the works side. Primitive Baptists believe that salvation is of the Lord, that it is by His grace, and that nothing needs to be added to it," (*What Do Primitive Baptists Believe*, page 5) by Elder Lasserre

Bradley, Jr. In this tract the author avoids all "faith" references. This denomination appeals to Ephesians 2:5 and avoids verse 8. They will state, "If God had intended for faith to be necessary for salvation, it would be clearly stated here in verse 5. But it is not and, therefore, God did not intend for faith to be a part of the plan of salvation". Having eternal life and being with God is such a serious thing; I don't know why people will "toy" with His will in such a frivolous manner. The statement by this group comes about by totally rejecting the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27.

There is a group who believe that faith is necessary for salvation. They quote John 3:16, Acts 16:31, and Ephesians 2:8 to show that they believe faith is necessary for salvation; however, their actions indicate that there is no need for repentance. For example, one time I visited their services and found out that some of the couples in their group were involved in fornication. When confronted with this they stated that they had been saved by their faith as Abraham was and once in this relationship with the Lord, that the Lord would not hold them accountable for sin as stated in Romans 4:3-8. When repentance was brought to their attention, they were quick to point out that John 3:16 said nothing about repentance. It is true the word "repentance" is not found in that location; can we therefore conclude that a person does not have to turn from sin if he appeals to John 3:16 as his sole source of salvation? Both repentance and faith are mentioned in Acts 20:21. I think that the reader is beginning to see that it is not a matter of interpretation of verses that cause some to accept some teachings at the expense of other plain scriptures.

Another topic where there is again a divergence of beliefs is in the area of baptism. In fact, if you were to visit three churches, one each Sunday and they spoke on this subject, you might hear the first week that baptism is a sprinkling of water and it has nothing to do with forgiveness of sins. The next week, you could hear baptism is a burial in water and is not for forgiveness of sins. The third Sunday, you might hear that baptism is a burial in water and is the point at which one receives forgiveness of sins. Could they all be correct? Of course not; they are opposites. Again, since the word of God is designed to correct us, let us see what it says. We have already seen that the scriptures teach that after hearing the gospel one is to believe to be saved. Acts 16:31, that one must repent, Acts 17:30,31, and we will find that before one can be

saved they must confess Christ as Lord, Romans 10:9,10. Now realizing we are dealing with a life and death subject, let us see what God has to say about one's response in baptism.

The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. God has asked us to demonstrate our faith in His death, burial, and resurrection by reenacting it in water, Romans 6:3,4. First of all, does Paul use the word sprinkling or burial - what do we do with dead people? We bury them! Now the question is, "At what point is a person forgiven, when he believes the gospel or when he obeys the gospel?" Let's let the Bible interpret itself. Paul telling about Jesus' return said that the Lord will return, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Is this consistent with the conversions in the book of Acts? Look at Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16 and let the Bible interpret itself. The latter is so clear, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Please interpret this verse with a non prejudiced mind.

As you have been reading this pamphlet, I hope you have come to realize that the religious division today is not caused by interpretation of scriptures but rather a rejection of some to accept others. We cannot cancel sections we don't want to conform to by appealing to others with whom we agree. Some time ago, during a Bible study conducted over a three months period, I rejected the scriptures teaching one must be immersed for the forgiveness of sins. My claim - "your interpretation." The man teaching me was so patient. He said, "You interpret Acts 2:38." I finally did and became a member of the Church of Christ. I now know I can give an answer from God's book that gives me an assurance that I know that I have eternal life. I never make the statement, "That's your interpretation," because I now know the Bible interprets itself.

The Righteousness of God

DON L. NORWOOD

As we talk about the righteousness of God in this article, we are not referring to the personal righteousness of God. We are

talking, instead, about the righteousness of a person who obeys the Gospel of Christ and becomes righteous as he is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

A sinner who is spiritually reborn (John 3:3,5; Titus 3:4-6) enjoys being righteous in God's sight. *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Colossians 1:13,14). This new righteousness in God is that acceptable spiritual state that one attains because he has entered into Christ (Galatians 3:26-29) and is now a citizen of the kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20).

The Jews believed in the true and living God, but when they rejected Christ and His teaching, they could not be acceptable to God (Romans 9:30-32; 10:1-4). They tried to obtain righteousness by doing the works of the Law of Moses, but that law was not given so that they could obtain righteousness before God through their own works. It was designed, rather, to show them that they were sinners and needed a Saviour, and then to lead them to the Messiah and to God's grace (Galatians 3:19-25).

Christ paid the redeeming price with His life, and sinners can obtain salvation and righteousness before God only by believing that Christ died for man's sins, that He was buried and raised from the dead on the third day, and that He ascended to heaven to intercede for sinful mankind (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Hebrews 7:25). Man's faith in Christ as Lord, followed by his willingness to obey the doctrine of Christ make it possible for him to be saved. *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* (Hebrews 5:9).

Are you one who is a partaker of the righteousness of God?

The New Creature and the New Birth

JAMES W. FARRIS

The concept of newness is an important theme in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul said, *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new."* It is a marvelous blessing to be clean,

refreshed, new, and restored to God. The very idea that God can bring a person from a sinful and lost state into a reconciled position with Him is beyond human imagination. Those of the world who are not "new creatures" are still in their sins and do not have the eternal hope of heaven. How then does one go about becoming a new creature?

Jesus Christ said in John 3:5, *"Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* This new birth is required for being a new creature! We know that the sins of man cause his division or separation from God (Isaiah 59:1,2). And seeing that *all* have sinned (Romans 3:23), it is necessary to have those sins taken away in order for spiritual newness to take place. Paul said that we are *"buried with Him by baptism into death... and raised to walk in newness of life."*

The contact point of newness always centers around a new birth, and the new birth takes place as one puts to death the old man of sin. Paul declares that those who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). And if anyone is *"in Christ Jesus"* he is a new creation. Simply, then, **one is baptized into Christ**. It is in baptism that forgiveness and remission of sins is accomplished (Acts 2:38).

Why would anyone put off doing what is required to be a new creature in the eyes of God? Truly, *"Why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, washing away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord."*

Let us remember that those *in Christ* are new creatures and are called to *"walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4). When we Christians fall, we have the promise that God hears our cries for forgiveness and salvation (1 John 1:9).

For this cause, let us live each day as though we are His people and His creatures. We live in newness. Surely this concept is a driving force in our lives of dedication toward God. May God help and bless us all as we live diligently for Him.

The Guiding Light

MIKE YATES

THINK ON THESE THINGS

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts " (2 Peter 3:3). Today we might refer to these scoffers as doubters. Why are so many people doubters when it comes to God's word? A poet, whose identity is unknown to me, penned the following thoughts concerning this topic:

How often we trust each other
And only doubt our Lord,

We take the word of mortals
And yet distrust His word.

But, oh, what light and glory
Would shine o'er all our days,

If we always would remember
God means just what He says.

In 1970, the Liberian tanker *Arrow* ran aground off Nova Scotia, broke into two halves and sank. The oil it was carrying floated to shore, polluting up to 125 miles of shoreline. Its Greek captain admitted that he did see an echo on his radar, indicating land, but he dismissed it as false.

This story has a shocking likeness to the tragedy of the *Titanic*. This great vessel and so many precious lives could have been saved if those in charge had taken the warnings more seriously — if they had not trusted so completely in the judgment and pride of men.

In the shattered world in which we live there exists a saving light that is so bright it causes the evil of darkness to flee in fear. I speak of God's word, the only perfect plan for man's salvation. Yet so many scoff at its precious words of life.

We want a life preserver, but we refuse to put it on.
We want a Savior, but we refuse to take His hand.

We want a life boat, but we refuse to get in.

In fact, it appears that many are expecting God to expend all the effort in saving us, while we ourselves do nothing.

God created us, He offered His Son for our sins, He gave us His written will to show us the way. By His Grace He has done all that He is going to do. The next move is ours... *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

A Summary of the Bible

FRANKLIN CAMP

There are some things one needs to carefully consider as one engages in the study of the Bible. This book which we are studying is no ordinary book. It may affect us in one of two ways: properly studied and applied, it will affect us for good in time and eternity, but an improper study of it will cause one to lose one's soul.

The Bible is *every man's* book. It is not intended for a special, elite group, for not only is the Bible every man's book, it is written for *the average person*. Scholars may study it and be challenged by its content, but it was not written with scholars necessarily in mind.

No one ever outgrows the Scriptures. The more individuals study them, the wider and deeper they become.

The Bible is a book which enables the reader to look into eternity. The best evidence of the inspiration of the Bible is to be found between its covers. No one will ever be a useful Christian unless one is a student of the Bible.

Matthew Henry said, "The Scriptures were written not to make us astronomers, but to make us saints." It is no wonder that Paul urged Timothy to study the Scriptures, *"rightly dividing,"* or handling aright, the word of truth, that he might be an approved workman before God.

The Bible is the greatest book in the world. It is the most accessible, and in it one finds truth that can be found in no other writings.

The Bible is the only book that can give a satisfactory explanation of God, the world, man, sin, salvation, service, and life here and life hereafter.

The Bible acknowledges man's faults, it is patient with man's weaknesses, it is severe with man's sins, and it is honest with his virtues and his hopes.

To own the Bible is to be rich. To study the Bible is to be wise; to obey it, to be strong. To know and to trust the Bible is to find life.

To be a student of the Bible and to handle it aright is the greatest accomplishment within the reach of any person. One may know English, astronomy, literature, music, sociology and philosophy, but if he does not know the Bible, he has failed in the only subject that brings all things into their proper relationship and that enables one to know life at its best.

The person who seeks to understand the Bible will endeavor to study its contents book-by-book, meet its characters as they unfold through its pages, study its types, its doctrine, its topics, paragraphs, sentences, and words. This is a lifetime work, a work that grows in richness as one's knowledge increases.

The Bible is the one book that can save many a heartache. The following was found on the fly-leaf of a Bible placed by the Gideons in a motel in Birmingham, Alabama: "May God bless the man who placed this book here. I am a young lady twenty-one years old, fatherless and motherless. Tonight this book saved me from taking a wrong step. May the next reader find it the comfort that I did."

There is no greater accomplishment in life than to be able to rightly divide the word of truth. It is worth all the sacrifice that is necessary in order to make such a study. One can never be great in the true sense of that word if he does not know the Bible, love it, live it, delight in it, and teach it without perversion and without misrepresentation.

The one who studies this book and knows how to handle it is in a position to render the greatest service to the world. No wonder Paul told Timothy, (1) to study, (2) to be a workman, and (3) to seek to be approved of God. There is no higher ambition on earth.

The Bible is a mirror that enables us to see ourselves. It is food which supplies the strength we need, a lamp to guide our way, a hammer to break and to build, a sword to fight and to defend, the seed to plant and grow, and the goal to own and to become our reward.

There are no experiences in life for which the Bible does not furnish guidance. May these thoughts lend encouragement to all of us to become diligent students of the word of God that we may know the way of life and find the life that is life indeed.

He Is Dead and Yet He Speaks

MAX PATTERSON

In the great faith chapter in the Bible, one of the examples is that of Abel. We can learn several important lessons from his life:

1. Abel did what he did by faith. Hebrews 11:4 states, "*by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.*" Abel listened to God. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). The result was, "*And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering*" (Genesis 4:4). Our worship must be in faith.
2. By obeying God, Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. God commended him for doing what was right. God bore witness by the fact that He accepted Abel's offering.
3. God testified of his gifts. This means that God spoke well of his offering — God approved. One of the meanings of "testifying" is to give a good report.
4. "*And by it he being dead yet speaks.*" Although Abel is long gone, he still speaks through the record of his faith. He speaks to us today. What does his record say to us? It says that God approves of our behavior when it harmonizes with His Word. What are the words and examples we will leave to future generations? With what actions do we want to speak, long after we are dead?

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the following lines in "A Psalm of Life," which seem appropriate just here:

Lives of great men still remind us
We can make our lives sublime;
And departing leave behind us,
Footprints in the sands of time.

Abraham

HANS J. DEDERSCHECK

The design of the Bible is to reveal the divine plan of redemption in Jesus Christ. An understanding of the Bible requires a knowledge of its first book, Genesis. One of the great personalities of Genesis is a unique man, Abraham. The messianic line, from Adam's son, Seth, and continuing through Noah's son, Shem, assumed a national character through the calling of Abraham who became the head of the messianic nation. A nation, separated from all other nations provided with divine institutions was required to prepare the way for, and to bring forth, the promised Messiah, the *"seed of the woman"*.

In Abraham we have the preeminent man of faith. *"Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Therefore know that only those who are of the faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham"* (Galatians 3:6-9).

It is by faith that we appropriate all the benefits of divine grace. By faith the atoning work of the Messiah becomes efficacious. By faith the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and faith is reckoned for righteousness. In Abraham is exemplified this faith by which we are justified in Christ. Of all the great souls of the Old Testament, it is Abraham whom Paul uses in setting forth this great doctrine of justification by faith.

"... That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ... But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:14, 25-29; Romans 4:1-25).

The call of Abraham shows four things:

- (1) he had to leave his native land;
- (2) God promised him another land;
- (3) he would receive a great seed;
- (4) in him all nations would be blessed (through Christ).

Following God's requirements and believing in His promises required a lot of faith on Abraham's part. Since God spoke to him, though, this was enough for the patriarch.

Abraham indeed left his home without knowing where he would go. God showed him, step by step, and he arrived at Canaan according to the Lord's promises. God made a covenant (a pact) with Abraham. He promised a powerful seed, and Abraham believed God. Through Isaac the way would be made for God to keep the messianic promise.

Abraham, who believed God, was justified. This is the way people need to come close to Christ today to be justified:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him " (Hebrews 11:6).

Therefore, "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

Caleb, a Man of God

KEN TYLER

Caleb was a remarkable man. Among a nation of disobedience he remained true to God. Listen to this pronouncement of the Lord, *"Surely there shall not one of these*

men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto their fathers, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord" (Deuteronomy 1:35,36). Verse 38 points out that righteous Joshua would also enter the promised land.

Why was Caleb pleasing to God? It was *"...because he... wholly followed the Lord"* (Deuteronomy 1:36). Does this statement describe your life? It's not good enough to say there is just too much sin and temptation. Caleb stood among a nation and world of wickedness. It's bad enough to live in a world of wickedness, but even the people of God in Caleb's day were evil. Yet, Caleb still *"wholly followed the Lord."* But he refused to lose sight of the most important thing in the world, that is, to please God.

Today, are you wholly following the Lord? Listen to these statements from Psalm 119: *"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart"* (verse 2); *"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments"* (verse 10); *"...I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart"* (verse 69). Acceptance of God means the surrendering of our all to Him.

In the New Covenant, Jesus explained, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it"* (Mark 8:34,35). No matter what compromises the world around us may be making, or how others are rationalizing regarding disobedience to God, we cannot please Him unless we are willing to count the cost and give up everything. Only then can He give back to us above and beyond all that we have laid on the line for Him.

Caleb has set a great example before us. If followed, it will lead to the promised land—heaven. May we all take heed to the example of this great man of God. Truly, we need more Calebs today

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