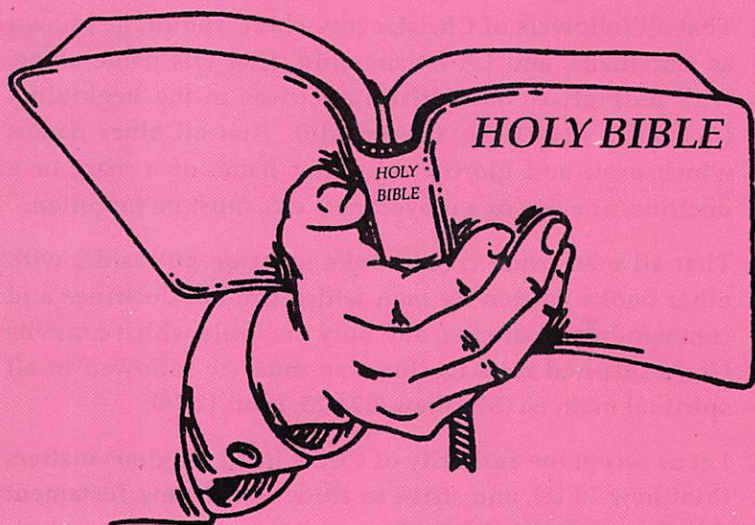


Monthly

November 2013

Price: Rs. 2/-

THE BIBLE TEACHER



OUR PLEA

LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 44

November 2013

No. 7

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

A Christian Is Simply A Christian

HAVE YOU heard the expression "Born again Christian?" Most of us have heard people talk about a "born again Christian." What do they mean by such an expression? The Bible teaches that one must be born again to become a Christian. But a Christian does not need to be born again.

According to the teaching of the Bible, every Christian, a follower of Christ, is born again person, born of water and of the Spirit. In fact, one cannot be a Christian in any other way. One is not born a Christian by physical birth. One becomes a Christian by personal choice, by being born of water and of the Spirit. The phrase or the term : "Born again Christian" is not even once mentioned in the Bible anywhere, because it denotes the idea of a special kind of Christian. A Christian is simply a Christian, a follower of Christ (Acts 11:26), one who has been saved by the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ; whom the Lord has added to His church; one who has been called to follow Christ's steps (1 Peter 2:21).

It is indubitably obvious that to enter into God's eternal kingdom of heaven one must be born again, and that that new birth must be of "water and the Spirit." Listen to Christ, He said: "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And to explain that more explicitly, Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5).

How then is one born of water and the Spirit? The reader must understand that it is a command of the Lord with which every person

must comply. It is something that each individual himself or herself must do. It is not a mystical experience bestowed upon a person by the Lord, which is "better felt than told." Such a concept is not even once mentioned anywhere in the Bible. There is no mystical or supernatural experience promised by the Lord in being born again. The one, the individual, who want to enter the kingdom of God, must be born again.

The Bible, and the Bible alone, must be our standard of authority for becoming a Christian and for everything that is enjoined in following the will of God. According to its teaching, one becomes a Christian when one believes in Jesus Christ, after learning His gospel, and repents of every wrong, and is baptized in water (immersed, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit) for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; Acts 2:38). Notice the parallel readings concerning the new birth: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" and, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (John 3:5 and Mark 16:16). Both of these statements were made by Jesus Christ Himself. Only the saved will enter the heaven. And to be saved one must both believe and be baptized ; and to enter the kingdom of heaven one must be born of water and the Spirit.

The inference is, it was by the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, the word of God was delivered to man (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), and when man obeys that word, it leads him to salvation. Notice too what the apostle Peter wrote to Christians at another place, he said, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart, **having been born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, **through the word of God** which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:22, 23). Question: How did they purify their souls? In obeying the truth that was brought to them by the Spirit of God. How were they born again? Through the word of God.

Here is an example: When a multitude of people had heard the gospel of Christ for the first time, as we read in the second chapter of the book of Acts, it says, "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit.' Then those who gladly received his words were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2: 37, 38, 41). In the last verse of the same chapter we read about those people that, "They were praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Were these penitent believers born again of water and the Spirit? Of course they were, because if they were not, the Lord would not have added them to His church, since He adds to His church only those who are saved. Yet, that wasn't the result of some sudden mystical experience "better felt than told." They had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and having believed in Him, had repented of their sins and were baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of their sins.

The new life begins with the new birth. "Or do you not know," asked the apostle Paul, "that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life." (Romans 6:3, 4).

Baptism of a believer signifies the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, as well as of the believer who died to sins by repentance from sins and allowed himself to be buried with Christ in the likeness of His death through baptism, then coming out of the waters of baptism, he begins to walk in the newness of life in Christ. This is how one is born again—born of water and of the Spirit—and this is how one becomes a Christian. There is no other way. A Christian is not born again. But one must be born again to become a Christian!

Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

Lesson 15

GOSSIP

J. C. CHOATE

OUR LESSON for this occasion, is about GOSSIP. But as usual, we need to define this word. I am sure you already know what it is, but for the sake of those who might not know, gossip just simply

means passing on news from one to the other, hearing something and then telling someone else, maybe adding to it some, and dropping some of the details. In other words, one might hear some story about someone and then pass it on to a friend, and then he tells his friend, and it might keep going until it turns into an entirely different story. But what harm is there in something like that? Just this! What starts off as the truth may end up being a lie that can hurt one or more. It may be a rumour or tale that someone has heard but it is told for the truth whether it is the truth or not. This can hurt and do much damage. One of the things that a country has to try to put down during the time of war or a crisis is that of gossip, false reports, and rumours. Sometimes we see statements written on walls, buses, etc., that encourage the people not to engage in this type of activity.

We have all seen the traditional carving in wood or stone of three monkeys. One has his hands over his eyes. One has closed his ears with his hands. The third one has his hands over his mouth. Then there is a statement written underneath that says, "MONKEY NO SEE EVIL, MONKEY NO HEAR EVIL, MONKEY NO SPEAK EVIL. We are not monkeys, but we would do well to follow that philosophy.

First of all, James tells us of the tongue and the problems we have with it. He says, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the

same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." (James 3 1-13).

Now in that lengthy statement, the inspired man of God is simply stressing the dangers of the tongue and all of the problems that we get ourselves into with our tongue. He talks about how we are able to control animals, great ships, and so on. If James had been writing today he could have included jet planes, space craft, and all kinds of machines that are far larger than anything that was known in the first century. Yet, man is able to control these. But James is showing that in contrast, that the tongue is such a small member and yet it is so difficult to control. He further shows the inconsistency of the tongue, inasmuch as a fig tree bears figs, and a vine bears berries, and neither does a fountain send forth both bitter water and sweet water; yet so often from the tongue comes both cursing and blessing. Actually, there is just one way to control the tongue and that is to turn to the Lord for help and to allow him to help you to bring it into subjection. Even then it is hard because it is so easy to let the tongue slip and say something that you shouldn't.

Again, James says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James 1:26). James is saying that one might claim to be religious but unless he was able to control his tongue then his religion is in vain or a waste of time. A part of being religious is to bring the tongue into subjection, to control it, and to use it to the glory of God rather than to allow the tongue to be used against the Lord.

As already mentioned, gossip is one of the biggest fruits of the tongue. But associated with that is fault finding, backbiting, and murmuring. In writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul said, "For I fear, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults . . ." (2 Corinthians 12:20). The Christians at Corinth had come out of a worldly background. Some of them then were guilty of those things they did while they were in the world. Therefore, Paul was trying to work with them and to help them to rid themselves of these bad things. But notice he spoke of them as being envious,

full of wrath, strife, backbitings, whispering, and so on. Of course all of these go together. When one is guilty of one then he is usually guilty of the others. But he mentions backbitings, which means that they talked to others about those who supposedly were their friends. That is, they would go behind their backs, or where they could not hear them talking about them. Then of course their friends had friends and these kind of things would continue to be circulated. Whispering was another practice. They would go and make these things public, but would quietly go around talking these things. Paul naturally condemned all of this, as it is likewise condemned today.

One of the things that stands out about those in Moses' day is the fact that they were bad to murmur against Moses. The children of Israel were constantly talking about themselves and expressing dissatisfaction with their leaders. In no way was this justified. The Apostle Paul refers to all of this in 1 Corinthians 10, and then exhorted the Christians at Corinth, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." (1 Corinthians 10:10). It is so easy to gripe, complain, and find fault with everything and everyone and to talk to your friends and neighbours about all of these things. When such is done, surely no good will come from it.

Now let us notice some verses of scripture that would encourage us to watch our speech. We read, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:6). Now listen to this: "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed." (Titus 2:8). James says, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath ..." (James 1:19). Again "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." (James 4:11).

The Apostle Peter reminds us, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." (1 Peter 3:10, 11).

When you therefore hear something then you should ask yourself some questions:

1. Is it the truth. Certainly we don't want to be passing on false information.

2. Why do I want to share this information with others? Is it worthy of being passed on? Will this information help others? Or am I using this as an opportunity to tell something bad about someone? Is my heart right toward this person and toward God?
3. What was the source of this information? Did it come from a friend, the radio, newspaper, or what? Am I sure that I can rely on such a source for the facts?
4. What is the nature of the report? Is it sad or happy? Is it bad or good? Is it going to hurt someone or help?
5. Would it not be better for me to simply keep that information to myself? I wouldn't want to withhold any information that need to be passed on but if it is just talk, loose talk, that which is not going to help anyone in particular, then it might do more good just to let it stop with me.

So you can see, there is a lot involved when we think about such matters. There is the matter of truth and falsehood, motives that are in the heart, and creating unnecessary problems, to mention only a few things.

Let us be careful that we do not use our tongue to hurt ourselves and to hurt others. Our speech will betray us. It doesn't take long for someone to tell the kind of person we are by simply listening to the things that we have to say. Above all, God knows us, our hearts, and he will hold us responsible for every word that we utter, and even every thought that enters our mind.

Forty Seven Bible References On The Evils Of Drinking

1. Gen. 9:20-27. A "man of distinction" and the tragic consequences of his drunkenness.
2. Gen. 19:30-38. Drinking results in Lot's debauchery of his own daughters.
3. Lev. 10:8-11. The Lord commanded Aaron and his sons not to drink either wine or strong drink while rendering service for God.
4. Num. 6:3. The vow of the Nazarite excluded drinking wine and strong drink.
5. Deut. 21:20. Drinking is one of the attributes of a stubborn, rebellious, and disobedient son.

6. Judges 13:4, 7, 14. Samson's mother was expressly commanded by the angel of the Lord not to drink wine or strong drink.
7. I Samuel 25:36-38. Nabal, an evil, drinking man was smitten by the Lord.
8. II Samuel 11:13. By the use of strong drink, David led Uriah into a fatal trap.
9. II Samuel 13:28-29. Amnon, on a drinking spree, was murdered by the servants of his brother, Absalom.
10. I Kings 16:8-10. While Elan, King of Israel, was "drinking himself drunk", one of his captains, who had conspired against him, killed him.
11. I Kings 20:13-21. While Ben-hadad, King of Syria, and thirty-two other kings were drinking themselves drunk in their pavilions, a small band of Israelites fell upon the Syrians and put them to flight.
12. Esther 1:5-22. After a week's feasting and drinking King Ahasuerus drunkenly tried to subject Vashti, his queen, to the beastly gaze of the inebriated people and princes.
13. Proverbs 20:1. No wise person will allow himself to be deceived by wine which is a mocker or by strong drink which is raging.
14. Proverbs 21:17. Drinking leads to poverty.
15. Proverbs 23:20-21. Winebibbers in poverty.
16. Proverbs 23:29-30. Strong drink produces sorrow, woes, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause and redness of eyes.
17. Proverbs 23:31-35. Look not - drink not.
18. Proverbs 31:4-5. Officials with the responsibility of human life on their hands should not imbibe.
19. Ecclesiastes 2:3. The writer of Ecclesiastes tried strong drink but in the end admitted that this too was vanity. (Eccl. 2:11, 12:8)
20. Ecclesiastes 10:17. That nation is blessed whose leaders eat for strength and refrain from drunkenness.
21. Isa. 5:11-12. Woe is pronounced on those who give themselves to strong drink.
22. Isa. 5:22. Further woe is pronounced upon the drunkards.
23. Isa. 22:13-14. Drinking often goes with carnal living and is classified as iniquity.
24. Isa. 28:1,3. A woe is pronounced upon the drunkards of Ephraim who shall be trodden under foot.

25. Isa. 28:7. Prophets and priests become incapable of spiritual leadership because of their drinking. (Ezekial 44:21)
26. Isa. 56:12. Drinking accompanies foolish optimism and the sinner's vain hope that his sins will not find him out.
27. Jer. 35:5-8, 14, 19. Rechabites who steadfastly held to total abstinence assured of God's continued blessings.
28. Dan. 1:5, 8, 16, 20. Daniel who refused to drink the king's wine was especially blessed by the Lord.
29. Dan. 5:1-4. A tragic example of a king who drank and who led his people to do likewise; desecrating the sacred; turning to idolatry.
30. Hosea 4:11. Strong drink and immorality go hand in hand.
31. Hosea 7:5. The king by his drinking was not only made sick but became scornful.
32. Joel 3:3. Young women were *sold* for the price of a drink.
33. Amos 4:1. Dissolute women, oppressors of the poor, call for their drink.
34. Amos 6:3-6. The evil, idle rich who were given to imbibing wine were not concerned about the affliction of the poor.
35. Hab. 2:5. Arrogance is inflamed by drink.
36. Hab. 2:15-16. It is wrong to lead another to drink. Drink leads to shame and humiliation.
37. Matt 24:48-51. Drinking is not consistent with alertness. (Luke 12:45-46)
38. Luke 1:15. Greatness of John the Baptist linked with his total abstinence.
39. Luke 21:34. Drinking prevents men from being prepared for the judgment day.
40. Rom. 13:13. We are admonished to walk honestly, not in rioting and drunkenness.
41. Rom. 14:21. Christians are admonished not to drink lest a brother be caused to stumble.
42. I Cor. 5:11. Christians forbidden to keep company with drunkards.
43. I Cor. 6:10. No drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God.
44. I Cor. 11:21. The Lord's Supper no time for drunkenness.
45. Gal. 5:21. Drunkenness prevents men from inheriting the Kingdom of God.
46. Eph. 5:18. Christians commanded not to be drunk with wine but to be filled with the Spirit.
47. I Tim. 3:3, 8. Church leaders should not be "given to wine".

You Can "Walk on Water" Today

CLEM THURMAN

FOLLOWED BY multitudes who wanted to hear and observe Him, Jesus sent the apostles ahead in a boat while He stayed behind to send the people home. Finally alone, He spent some needed time in prayer. Meanwhile, on the sea of Galilee a storm had arisen, and the disciples found themselves in difficulty. It was then they saw the Lord, "*walking on the sea*" toward them! How startled they were, even crying, "*It is a ghost!*" But Jesus said, "*Be of good cheer; it is I; be—not afraid.*" Impetuous Peter then said, "*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" (Matt. 14:22-31). It is easy to belittle Peter, for didn't his doubts cause his problems? But if it was his doubt that caused him to sink, it was his great faith that led him to walk on the water in the first place. And how many of us would have had the courage to have stepped out of that boat onto the stormy sea? There are great lessons for us in this event, for we can "*walk on the water*" today, figuratively, as we serve the Lord.

WE MUST LEARN THE LORD'S WILL FOR US

The Lord said, "*They shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me... Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (Jno. 6:45; 8:32). The Lord reveals His will for us "*in words*" (1 Cor. 2:13), which are called "*the Scriptures*" (2 Tim. 3:16). The only way we can know what the Lord wants us to do is to read it in His word. That is the reason we are encouraged to "*search the Scriptures*" (Jno. 5:39; Acts 17:11). Admonitions to read, study and teach the word of the Lord abound (Acts 2:42; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; Col. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:14-16; 3:15-17; 4:1-5; etc.). When the Lord said, "*Come,*" that was enough for Peter: he went over the side of the boat immediately. That should be our attitude, also.

Not everyone in the boat went over the side and walked on the

water. For Jesus never told them to do so. He spoke to Peter, not the others, when He said, "come." We need to "handle aright" or "rightly divide" the word of God today (2 Tim. 2:15). Not every command is given to you, and not every promise is for you. God told Noah to build an ark, but He doesn't tell you that. He told Abram to leave his country, home and family and go to a foreign place: He doesn't tell you that. God told Israel to keep all the commandments of the law (Deut. 6:24), but for us today to keep the law means that we are "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:6). The Lord doesn't tell me to step over the side of the boat and walk on the water, and He makes no promise that I can do it. But he did that with Peter. We must learn what the Lord wants US to do.

WE MUST HAVE FAITH IN THE LORD'S POWER

It would never have occurred to Peter to step over the side of that boat if had not seen the Lord actually walking on the water. That gave him assurance in the power of the Lord. In fact, all of the miracles of the Lord were to give us assurance of His power: *"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye may believe"* (Jno. 20:30-31). Nicodemus pointed to the miracles of Jesus as the proof he needed to come to Him for guidance: *"We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the things which thou doest, except God be with him"* (Jno. 3:2).

Jesus, before His death, foretold that He would be *"raised from the dead the third day"* (Matt. 27:63; Mk. 8:31). One reason for the resurrection of Jesus is to give us assurance of His power, over life and death: *"Declared to be the Son of God with power. . . by the resurrection from the dead"* (Rom. 1:4). We are told that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, that none can be saved in other way (Jno. 14:6; Acts 4:12). We are told that it is only *"in Christ"* that we have salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14), the promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20) and all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). The miracles of Jesus, and His resurrection, give assurance that He has that power. Thus, because He could walk on the water and do all the other miracles recorded, we have faith that *"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him"* (Heb. 7:25).

WE MUST HAVE FAITH THAT THE LORD ENABLES US

Peter saw the Lord walking on the water, but he was not

presumptuous enough to try the same thing on his own. So he requested, *"Bid me come to you"* (Matt. 14:28). He believed in the Lord's power to walk on water, but now he is asking that the Lord make him able to do the same. When Jesus said, *"Come,"* Peter stepped over the side and onto the water immediately. He not only believed in the power of the Lord, he also believed the Lord's power could enable him to do whatever the Lord wanted done. That is the kind of faith we need. Paul wrote later, *"I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord"* (1 Tim. 1:12). Noah believed that God would enable him to build the ark, so he did it (Heb. 11:7). Abraham believed that God would make him able to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and still raise up seed through Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19), so Abraham did what God told him. That is the faith we need.

Too often those who claim to believe in the Lord do not really believe that He will enable them to do His will. One says, "I would become a Christian, but I am afraid I can't live it." Yet another states, "I would talk to my neighbor about the Lord, but it wouldn't do any good." In a church business meeting, one argues, "It is a good work, but we are just not able to do it." The common characteristic of all these is clear: they just don't believe in the power of the Lord. They may say they believe, but they don't really believe that the Lord can work through THEM to accomplish His purpose. Paul wrote, *"It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). God worked through Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, He worked through David to overcome Goliath. And He can work through us, if we let Him, to do whatever he wants us to accomplish. As Paul declared, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13). This is the point. It is not what I can do, but what the Lord can do through me. It was not Peter's power, his skill nor his ability that enabled him to walk on water. The Lord enabled him. That is what we must believe, then, *"All things are possible to him that believeth"* (Mk. 9:23).

WE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE OF OUR CONVICTION

No matter how strongly Peter may have protested his faith, if he had not stepped over the side of that boat no one would have believed him! But he had the courage of his conviction. He believed, and he immediately acted on that faith. As James asked, *"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith but have not*

works? can that faith save him?... Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith" (Jas. 2:14-18). We must have the courage of our convictions today. If we believe the Lord, let our lives show that we believe.

When we believe, our response will be just as those great heroes of faith in Heb. 11. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others: they all believed God, they believed in God's power and they believed God's power would enable them to do God's will. And because they believed, they did what God told them. For people who have the same kind of faith today, the pattern will be the same. Jesus said that the gospel was to be preached to the lost, and He promised, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mk. 16:16). There is nothing magical, nor curative, about being put under water—not any more than there was something magical about the feet of Peter when he walked on water! The power belongs to Christ. He empowered Peter, and it is His power that gives baptism its purpose: *"unto remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38), *"wash away sins"* (Acts 22:16), *"save you"* (1 Pet. 3:21). The power is not in the water, it is the Lord's power. And for people who believe the Lord, that is not a problem.

How can I overcome the temptations of life (1 Cor. 10:12-13)? How can I gain the strength I need to talk to friends and relatives about their need for Christ and His salvation (Acts 5:42; 2 Cor. 4:13)? How can I encourage my brothers in Christ and admonish the disorderly (1 Thes. 5:14). And how can I go to an erring brother and *"restore such a one"* (Gal. 6:1)? The answer is always the same: *"I can do all things through Christ. . . I thank him that, enabled me, even Christ Jesus."* I can't do it, myself. But the Lord can do it through me, if I surrender my will to Him and allow Him to work through me.

It is impossible to walk on the water. Except that the Lord, by His power, made it possible for Peter. We look at the works God wants us to do, and we are often staggered by their magnitude and dwarfed by our own inadequacies. But let us look to the Lord. His power can make us what we ought to be. His power can enable us to do whatever He wants done. His power can even make us *"walk on the water,"* if that is His will. Let us seek the will of the Lord, and do it. *"Lord, bid me come to thee."*

IN DUE TIME

JOHNNY RAMSEY

IN ROM. 5:6 and Gal. 4:4 we learn that Jehovah sent Christ *"in due time"* or *"in the fulness of time."* All history is divided into two categories: B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini = *"year of the Lord"*). A great gospel song tells us:

Out of the ivory palaces.

Into a world of woe,

Only His great eternal love

Made my Savior go.

As we open the New Testament, the Roman Empire rules the word, the Herod family dominates Judea, synagogues cover Palestinian soil, the Pharisees and Sadducees are popular Jewish sects and Greek is the language of the masses of men. "All roads lead to Rome" is an accurate statement. How did all of these things happen to be? What background material produced scenery for the advent of the Christ?

Five centuries before Jesus was born in Bethlehem (as Micah 5 had foretold), the children of Israel, Abraham's seed, were returning from 70 years of Babylonian captivity. While in bondage, due to their own sin, the Jews had begun to erect synagogues as temporary "places of assembly" until they could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. They faced these synagogues toward Jerusalem. About 60 years ago an ancient synagogue was uncovered by historians who were amazed to find significant murals on the walls, each mural reflecting thoughts of the Messiah:

[1] The anointing of David as king

[2] The scape-goat on the Day of Atonement

[3] Ezekiel's "valley of dry bones."

In 2 Sam. 7 we learn that Christ was to come out of the loins of David. In Jno. 1:29 Jesus is called *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* The fruition of Ezekiel's vision was the restoration of God's people after captivity which resulted, finally, in the coming of the Savior. The synagogue movement kept Judaism alive until the Redeemer came *"to seek and to save the lost"* (Lk. 19:10). Since the majority of the Jews never returned to Judea but were scattered throughout Babylon, Persia, Greece and (later) Roman territories, they built these synagogues wherever

they were “dispersed.” Often Greeks would attach themselves to these assembly halls. After the Septuagint version of 280 B.C., which translated the Old Testament from the ancient, dead language of Hebrew into the common vernacular of Greek, the Gentiles could understand clearly and without prejudice the Messianic passages. These “devout Greeks” (Acts 17) often gave the apostles a fair hearing while the biased Jews would attempt to kill them (Acts 13:41-46). Just remember these three words, each beginning with the letter S, as a reminder of the days prior to the coming of the Christ (Messiah):

SCATTERING SYNAGOGUE SEPTUAGINT.

At the close of the Babylonian captivity, the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon. Some of the last Old Testament books have their setting in the days of the Persian rulers. Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Malachi are some of those books. But on the horizon loomed a character that would reshape the destiny of millions of people in the political arena at least. The son of Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, conquered Persia and from 330 B.C. till Rome overthrew Carthage in 146 B.C. the dominant factor in world affairs would be Greek culture. The influence of Alexander lived on long after his early death (due to immorality) because of the benefits of his emphasis upon educating the minds of men. For instance, the Septuagint translation of the Scriptures came from the scholarly efforts of men attached to the tremendous library in Alexandria.

There were three great philosophers that contributed mightily to the background of the New Testament era. From 375 B.C. onward the teachings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle made monumental strides in a state-dominated existence. Socrates was put to death for instilling within men the desire to think for themselves. His influence broke the shackles of robot-like living for millions captivated by governmental tyranny! Finally, due to Socrates’ courageous message, men were thinking for themselves. Plato taught men to think spiritually. Aristotle gave to the world great rules of logic and thereby taught men how to think. Today his material on logic is used in universities and debating societies. These three brilliant teachers left a rich legacy for the first century preaching of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Every one of their sermons which are recorded in the New Testament demanded that the audience think for themselves, think spiritually and react

logically to the arguments presented. It was in such an era that God sent His Son into the world.

Yes, it is certainly true that, "*in the fulness of time*" God sent forth the Savior.

The Greatest Question

KEITH KASARJIAN

MUCH CAN be taught by asking questions. The great philosopher, Socrates, developed a method of teaching that was based upon the asking of questions. Jesus, the master teacher, also taught in this fashion. We read question after question being asked of those whom Jesus was teaching. The greatest question, however, that Jesus ever asked is recorded in Matthew 16:26. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Many fundamental precepts are set forth by Jesus in this great question.

From this question we learn that **man has a soul**. This may seem elementary, but some deny this very fact. Our Jehovah's Witness friends claim that no person possesses a soul. The Biblical doctrine, however, is that mankind is composed of two elements—body and soul. We read in I Thessalonians 5:23, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved." We read also, "receive ... the word which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). The word "soul" is found 458 times in 432 verses in the Bible, including twice in our text. It is quite obvious that man has a soul.

Also from this question we see that our soul is valuable. The implication of this rhetorical question is that one soul is worth more than all the world. Consider the value of all the diamonds in Africa, of every pearl in the Orient, and every gallon of oil in the Middle East. Add to that all money in the bank accounts of the world's wealthiest men, yet one soul remains superior in worth. Our soul is valuable because of the price paid for it (John 3:16).

Finally from this question we see that our soul can be exchanged. Jesus tells us in essence that it is possible to trade our soul for something else. Before trading, though, one must realize that no matter what they get in return, they will be short-changed. In spite of this, many will trade their souls away (Matthew 7:13, 14). Some will trade their souls for apathy. They have even become

apathetic about their apathy. They do not care about their souls, the souls of others, or living godly. Still others will trade their souls for unscriptural marriages. They know what our Lord said in Matthew 19:9, yet they remain in a sinful marriage. Our soul is worth more than such a relationship. Others we know are “swapping” their soul for worldly pleasures. They are lured away from God by the love of money or are caught up in the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). They have given themselves over to immorality, immodesty, and to “if it feels good, do it” motto of the world. We know it breaks the heart of the Father to see people trading their souls for such worthless matters.

At least three eternal truths are quite evident in this question asked by our Lord. We must know and teach others that man has a soul, it is valuable, and that it can be exchanged, but only at great expense.

May we never squander or jeopardize our souls with the matters of this world but rather “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age” (Titus 2:12) so we will live with Him forever.

A New Man Desires A New World

CECIL CORKREN

CHRISTIANS TODAY, like Abraham, “Look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). This world is not the Christian’s home. He is just passing through. His desire is “a better country, that is, heavenly” (Hebrews 11:16).

Paul declares, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). A Christian is NEW. The old world is corrupt, and filled with sin (I John 2:15-17). Our world today is filled with tormented minds. These tormented minds are the result of our tormented world. When we feed our minds daily on lust and greed, which we see on TV, we too will be tormented. Most of what can be viewed would upset the mind of the best of Christians. Lot, was subjected to such an environment which, “vexed his righteous soul from day to day with its unlawful deeds” (II Peter 2:6-8). Lot was said to be righteous, but his soul was affected by the sins of Sodom. He must have desired a better place.

Noah, like Lot, had a similar problem with this old world. In the

days of Noah, "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Noah was unhappy with his world and "by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became the heir of righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

New goes with new. A true Christian falls out of love with this old world, and sets "his affections on things above, not on things on this earth" (Colossians 3:2). Jesus taught that new goes with new (Matthew 9:16-17). However, as long as we live here on this earth we cannot escape our surroundings. Paul said, "For then must ye go out of the world" (I Corinthians 5:10). When man lives either apart from God or defiant to God, he has made this old world his home. Social and political attempts are made to deal with the world's unrest, but are bound to be largely ineffective. Man lives and works in vain for a better world. I am reminded of what the apostle Peter says, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption" (II Peter 2:19). The dictators and corrupt politicians that have been cast upon the shores of the twentieth century, are the cause of much of our disorder. Man has followed these leaders and has created for himself a world filled with violence.

It is the individual man who needs to be remade first; then society will be remade by restoring man back into fellowship with his Maker. Christ is the panacea for all earth's woes. We can never make heaven out of this old world. Christ is coming again to take us to a better environment (John 14:1-6; II Peter 3:13). There, God will make all things new (Revelation 21:1-27). This is where "new man" desires to go when life is over. A place where joy and pleasure will never end (Psalm 16:11). "O think of the home over there, by the side of the river of light. I'll soon be at home over there." The story has been told of the old missionary returning from a long stay on the mission field, was getting off the ship when President Teddy Roosevelt was returning from an African Safari. It seemed as if all of New York City turned out to welcome the President home, and the old missionary had no one to meet him. He felt bad, and thought how nice it was to be greeted like Teddy was greeted. That night in his room after praying, he remembered why he was not greeted warmly at the dock that day. He suddenly realized he had not arrived at home yet. Yes, **THE NEW MAN DESIRES A NEW WORLD!**

A ROOT OUT OF A DRY GROUND

RONNIE MCABEE SEYMOUR

SEVEN CENTURIES before Jesus ever began to crawl as a tiny baby upon this earth, the Messianic Prophet foretold of Him as a "tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2). A tender plant is not welcomed and accepted into harsh environments. A root is not supposed to survive in a dry ground.

As a newborn, the Tender Plant was laid down into a dirty feed trough just outside of an inn because all of the rooms were full (Luke 2:7)—and He lived. The Root out of a dry ground later found Himself in the arms of His parents, who were fleeing to Egypt to avoid His being killed by Herod (Matthew 2:13-15)—and He lived. As He traveled down a dusty road one day, He turned to someone and mentioned that He had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58)—and He lived. His own brothers rejected Him and did not believe in Him (John 7:5)—and He lived. After returning to His hometown of Nazareth, the people that He grew up with led Him to the brow of a hill to throw Him down over the cliff (Luke 4:28-30)—and the Root out of a dry ground lived. Many of His disciples, after murmuring at His teachings, went back and walked with Him no more (John 6:60-66)—and He lived. A harsh environment of Jews took up stones to kill the Tender Plant (John 10:31)—and He lived.

Day after day and night after night the rejections, assaults, and conflicts continued. While He opened the ears of those who could not hear, many continued to close their ears to His teachings—and He lived. After the Root out of a dry ground opened the eyes of those who could not see, many continued to close their eyes to see His truth—and He lived.

Jesus was not the king that they had envisioned and desired. He did not meet their standards and did not fit the appearance of a king in their minds. We are reminded that He had "no form nor comeliness" and when the people saw Him, there was "no beauty" that they "should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2)—and He lived.

He approached the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives with the remaining eleven apostles standing next to Him; but after His arrest, all the disciples forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:56)—and He lived.

The Tender Plant was accused of speaking blasphemy and told

that He was deserving of death. His enemies spit in His face, beat Him, and struck Him with the palms of their hands (Matthew 26:65-67)—and He lived. “The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:27-31).

Jesus was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3). “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). After thirty-three years, the Tender Plant died in that harsh environment. The Root out of a dry ground was “cut off out of the land of the living” (Isaiah 53:8). But after three days and three nights in the tomb, we can all say with gratitude in our hearts that He was raised from the dead and He lives.

- He suffered for us, and we need to praise Him.
- He endured the thorns on His head, and we need to be thankful for Him.
- He overcame the nails in His hands and the nail through His feet, and we need to honor Him.
- They beat Him and spit in His face, but we need to reverence Him.
- They struck Him on the head and mocked Him, but we need to respect Him.

Our sins have been washed away by His blood! “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

We need to love the Tender Plant, and cherish the Root out of a dry ground with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

The Most Valuable Discovery

ALLAN ELDRIDGE

IN 1847, Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh discovered the use of chloroform as an anesthetic in surgery. Some claim this to be the most significant discovery of modern medicine.

In his later years, Sir James was lecturing at Edinburgh University and a student asked, "What do you consider to be the most valuable discovery of your lifetime?"

He answered quickly, "My most valuable discovery was when I discovered myself a sinner and that Jesus Christ was my Savior."

The book of Romans makes clear these two significant truths that Simpson articulated. The problem is sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Paul declares that the power of God unto salvation is the gospel of Jesus (Romans 1:16). In Christ we have the divine provision: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The price that was paid? "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).

Now what's the process by which we contact that blood? By placing our faith and trust in Jesus (Romans 5:1), confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10), turning from our sins in repentance (Romans 2:4), and being buried with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:1-4). Then we are to dedicate the rest of our lives in service to Him (Romans 6:12-18; 12:1).

The most valuable discovery you and I can make is that we are sinners and that Christ desires to be our Savior.

CONVERSION IS NOT MYSTERIOUS

BENNIE FORISTER

CONVERSION IS not some miraculous, better-felt-than-told process. Turning to God is something that people can understand, understand alike, and readily obey. God gave man his Word which gives him "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3). The scriptures tell mankind what to do in order to be saved from sin and its wages (Rom. 6:23). The scriptures nowhere teach that the Holy Spirit comes directly into a sinner's heart to convert him independent of his own will. The inspired apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Thus, the gospel and not "direct operation" is God's power unto salvation.

Conversion demands change. The necessary changes through which one goes in the process of conversion to Christ are three.

They are: (1) A change of heart (mind); (2) A change of life; (3) A change in relationship. Let us notice each of these in the conversion process.

Since Christianity is a religion that involves the heart, a change of heart must occur in conversion. The heart, as the Bible often uses the word, refers to the mind (i.e. the part of man that thinks, reasons, believes, understands, desires, trusts, purposes and obeys). For example, in Matthew 9:4 the Bible says, "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, 'Wherefore think ye evil IN YOUR HEARTS?'" In Romans 10:1, Paul stated that his "HEART'S desire and prayer to God" was that Israel might be saved. Other passages revealing what the heart actually does are: Romans 10:10, Mark 2:6, Matthew 13:15, Proverbs 3:5, II Corinthians 9:7, Romans 6:17, and others. Thus, it is the mind of man, and not the physical heart, which must be changed in conversion. This change takes place through faith, which comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).

After one's confidence and trust in Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord have been established through hearing the gospel, his life needs to be reformed. One's faith in Christ should lead to such reformation. It should cause him to turn from sin to doing that which is lawful and right (Ezek. 18:5-32). This change in conduct is brought about through repentance. Repentance is a change of mind or will regarding sin, which is produced by godly sorrow (II Cor. 7:10) which results in a reformation of life. Hence, the sinner must resolve to turn and travel in the opposite direction concerning sin and the love thereof.

Having destroyed the love and practice of sin by faith and repentance, one must then have his state or relationship changed. This relationship is changed through baptism, which is preceded by one's confession of his faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10). Paul declared, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST were baptized into his death? 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). Although one's desires and directions of life are changed by faith and repentance, it takes the consummating act of baptism to change one's relationship with God. The penitent believer is baptized into Christ and thus becomes a new creature, a Christian (II Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13, 14). Hence, conversion is a process which can be known and obeyed by man. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ?

Is Your House Covered By The Blood?

EDDY GILPIN

JUST PRIOR to his bringing the tenth and final plague upon the land of Egypt, God gave unto Moses instructions for the observance of the Passover (Ex. 12). The true significance of this feast was not realized until Christ, "our passover", was crucified on the cross (1 Cor. 5:7). The blood of that paschal lamb was to be placed upon "the lintel and the two side posts" of every house (Ex. 12:22). When accomplished, that house would be protected from "the destroyer" as he passed through the land bringing death to the firstborn of each household not covered by the blood (Ex. 12:23). In like manner, the blood of Jesus must be applied to every soul who would be protected from "the wages of sin" (Rom. 6:23). In consideration, then, of these matters, the question might be asked, "Is your house covered by the blood?"

The husband and father is to be the head of the house (Eph. 5:23, 24). This does not mean that the man is better or has more favor in the eyes of God. Someone had to fill this role and task of being the head over the house, and God chose the man to fill that position. However, along with this position comes great and grave responsibility. The man is to be the spiritual leader in his home. He is to be careful that his children are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In light of this command, it should be asked of every father, "Is your house covered by the blood?"

Exemplarship is a strong teacher, either for good or bad. Influence is so powerful that it even continues after one has departed the ways of this life (Heb. 11:4). Fathers, is this example-ship and influence for good present in your homes? Are you yourself a faithful member of the body of Christ, and thus "covered by the blood"? If not, how can you expect your children to become such or be such? The poet has said it thus:

"WALK A LITTLE PLAINER, DADDY"

Walk a little plainer, Daddy,

Said a little boy so frail;

I'm following in your footsteps,

And I don't want to fail.

Sometimes your steps are very plain

Sometimes they are hard to see;

So walk a little plainer, Daddy,

For you are leading me.

I know that once you walked this way,
Many years ago;
And what you did along the way
I'd really like to know.
For sometimes when I am tempted,
I don't know what to do;
So walk a little plainer, Daddy,
For I must follow you.
Some day when I am grown up
You are like what I want to be;
Then I will have a little boy,
Who will want to follow me.
And I would want to lead him right,
And help him to be true;
So, walk a little plainer, Daddy,
For we must follow you.

—*Author Unknown*

Yes, fathers your example and influence will continue on for years to come. The way you rear your children will determine to a great extent how they will rear theirs. Is the Lord a part of your own personal life? If so, how big a part is he? Can your children see that you are governed by the spiritual standards contained in God's word? Do they see you studying the Bible, praying and leading the home in matters spiritual? These are sobering questions to which each father needs to give close attention. Every father owes his children this kind of foundation. It is a basic responsibility that God has given to him, and a command by which he will be judged. Fathers, give serious consideration to these things, and make sure that your house is "covered by the blood".

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Printed and Published by Sunny David for Church of Christ, Chitranjan Park, New Delhi-110019 and Printed at: Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri Phase-I, New Delhi-110064. Editor: Sunny David (Cell: 09810896789, E-mail: theinspiredbook@gmail.com).

Regd. No. 26921/71

Postal Regn. No.

DL(S)-17/3154/2012-2014

Licence to Post without Prepayment

No. U/SE/25/2012-2014

Posted at Lodi Road HO

Total No. of pages 24+cover

on 10-11 November 2013

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