

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 45

June 2014

No. 2

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Women Should Not Teach Or Speak In The Church

TODAY WE are living in an age that exhibits a widespread rejection of God's authoritative teaching on many subjects, one of them being: Should women speak or teach from God's word in the church or publicly where men are present?

The Bible quite explicitly states: "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church (*assembly*)" (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35). "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." (1 Timothy 2:11, 12). Further, stating a valid reason as to why Christian women should not speak, teach, lead, or exert authority over men in assembly of the church, he says, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived fell into transgression." (1 Timothy 2:13, 14). The argument here is that Adam, whom God had created before Eve, was not deceived, but Eve, thus exhibiting a serious flaw in her that disqualified her from being the head or leader. That quality of woman being easily deceived is alone sufficient to justify the appointment of men as elders and evangelists and leaders in the church. Our spirit and conduct, as Christians, should be suitable to our rank. There is a natural distinction God has

established between man and woman. Those He has placed in subjection to others should not set themselves on a level, nor affect or assume superiority. The woman was made subject to the man, and she should keep her station and be content with it. For this reason women must be silent in the churches, not set up for teachers; for this is setting up for superiority over the man.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, instructed by the Holy Spirit of God, the apostle wrote: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man and the head of Christ is God." (1 Cor.11:3). Is there anything wrong with this stated order of authority? If God is the head of Christ, as it says He is, does this mean that God is going to mistreat Him or use Him as his slave? Or is the Son inferior to the Father?

Christ, speaking of His head, in John 10:17, said, "Therefore my Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." It was the will of God that Jesus should lay down His life for sinners; which He did, showing His submission to His head, God. In the Garden of Gethsemane as He prayed, just before His death, we observe Him saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matt. 26:39). What do we observe? We learn Christ, the Son, accepting His submission to God, the Father.

Scripturally, speaking, the head of woman is man. God placed man over woman. Man is the head, the leader of the household. From Ephesians 5:22-25 and 1Peter 3:1-7 we learn that wives should be submissive to their own husbands; and husbands are to love their wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Further, the husband is commanded to treat his wife with honor and understanding, realizing that she is a weaker vessel. This does not mean, however, that she is an inferior person, or that she is of less importance than man. Both man and woman are equally important before God. He loves all humans equally. Christ, by the will of God, died for all. In heaven, Jesus taught, they all will be like angels of God, that is, they will not be as husband and wife, marrying and being given in marriage. (Matthew 22:30).

But we need to learn that God is the creator. He created both man and woman. He knows, therefore, who is stronger and who is weak. He created them in that way. Man needs woman and woman needs man; and the Creator God has created them differently. In comparison to man a woman is usually more affectionate and tender; she could be easily shattered, broken,

melted, and conned. The devil knew this fact, and therefore he approached Eve in the garden and was successful in deceiving her.

So whether it is the home or the church, God has, in His Bible, specified how men and women should live in their respective spheres. At home woman is the homemaker, and man is the head. He is responsible for looking after the welfare of the wife and children, protecting them and guiding them in the fear of the Lord. Likewise, in the church men ought to take the leadership; to lead worship services, preach and teach from God's word, lead prayers, singing, and serve the Lord's Supper. But, let women keep silent in the assembly of the church, for they are not permitted to speak (1 Timothy 2:11-12), and it is shameful for women to speak in church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

But what about women being appointed as elders (or bishops or pastors) or evangelists in churches today? Are they going to keep silent? Are they going to sit in the assembly in submission? Evidently those who are making such appointment, and those who are accepting such positions are doing so in direct contravention and violation of God's written will.

Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

Lesson 22

COVETEOUSNESS

J.C. CHOATE

I WOULD ASSUME that you are familiar with the word covet or covetousness. If not, I am sure that you are well acquainted with the practice of it either in your life or in the lives of those around you. It is therefore defined to mean that of wanting what the other person has, longing for something, to be envious.

One of the ten commandments was: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." (Exodus 20:17). That means then that God recognized that one of man's big problems was that of covetousness. Because this was one of man's weaknesses he made one of the ten commandments: "Thou shalt not covet."

A good example of where this sin was committed was when the children of Israel took Jericho. They were told not to plunder

it, or to take anything from it for themselves. But later on after God's people had suffered a great defeat at Ai, then Joshua cried out to the Lord to ask why this happened. Then God explained that there was sin in the camp. With that information, Joshua and his assistants began to go through the people to find out who the guilty party was. With that as a background, let us now read: "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." (Joshua 7:19-21). Now what was the penalty for this sin? Achan, his family, and all he had were taken to the valley of Achor and there that day Israel stoned them and burned them. But wasn't that a severe form of punishment? Yes, but you have to consider the fact that God had told them not to do that. What if all had done it, or what if Achan had gotten away with his disobedience? Furthermore, as a result of his sin, the army of Israel was defeated by their enemy at Ai, and this meant that many lost their lives there because of Achan's sin. Therefore, he and all of his had to suffer the consequences. What was the sin? Being covetous, wanting something that didn't belong to him.

Solomon, the wise man, said, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not." (Proverbs 21:25, 26). Psalmist David said, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." (Psalm 10:3).

Jesus taught, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, Adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness: deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: And these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23). Now do you see where covetousness is listed? Right there among all of the other wicked thoughts and practice. It is therefore something to be deplored and rejected.

Although "Thou shalt not covet" was one of the ten commandments of the law of Moses, and even though that law

has been replaced by the law of Christ, still in the law of Christ, there is ample proof that covetousness is a sin. As with many other sins, Paul lists covetousness as being one of those things that will keep one out of the kingdom of God, and finally, heaven itself. He said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Again, he said to the Christians at Corinth, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:11). So he says that one cannot be covetous and enter the Lord's kingdom or church, but if one becomes a Christian, and then becomes covetous, then we should not have social contact with him, that is, if he refuses to repent of his sin.

Paul wrote the Romans about those who had so turned from God that he gave them up to their own wickedness, but he describes them as, "Being filled with all unrighteousness fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, Murder, debate deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:29-32). Think about it! Here were people who had all of these bad things in their lives, that which was worthy of death, and being covetous was one of those sins listed. The fact that it was listed with all of these other sins, then that helps us to see the seriousness of this evil being found in one's life.

Paul tells us that if one is going to be an elder in the church then he cannot be covetous. (1 Timothy 3:3). Again he said, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2

Timothy 3:1-5). Peter spoke of some of his day as being those "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray ..." (2 Peter 2:14, 15).

But who did we say the covetous were? Those who are longing for something they don't have, wanting it even at the expense of the other fellow, being envious of what they see. Paul also says that covetousness is idolatry, that is, one lets money, material things, and such like, become his god. In writing to the Christians at Colosse, Paul said, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupescence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." (Colossians 3:5, 6). To the Ephesian Christians, he wrote, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God." (Ephesians 5:5). A covetous person is also a potential thief. He may also be a liar. Certainly a Christian that is covetous will lie about his giving to God and to man. A good example of that is found in Acts 5 in the case of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Ghost about the amount of money they were giving.

It is so sad to see human beings striving after material things, laying up, piling up for themselves more and more, and all the while wanting more and more. Then they boast and brag about what they have. They take pride in these things. This then becomes that which they worship. So one's sin is compounded again and again, and you can see why covetousness is defined as being idolatry.

The scriptures reminds us of who we are. We are human beings, God's creation, and especially as God's spiritual children, he has promised to provide for our needs. (Matthew 6). We might not get all we want, but we will get all we need. Now listen to these words by the inspired man of God, the Apostle Paul, as he speaks to the young preacher, Timothy: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of

all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Timothy 6:6-11). My friends, you would do well to give a lot of thought to those wise words. The Hebrew writer added these words, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5).

So, we cannot say anything good about covetousness as it is used in longing, seeking, craving, wanting, and hoarding up the material things of this world. Covetousness is a sin because of what it is and because of what it leads to. It is also deceptive because it never fully satisfies and in the end one loses it all. Those who covet cannot be saved, and those who are saved become sinners when they begin to covet. Whether it is the desire for money, position, the wife of another, or whatever it may be, one is to flee from that sin, repent of it, and obey God if he wants to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

Instrumental Music In Christian Worship: From God Or Man?

KEN TYLER

THE ONLY WAY we can answer this question is to go to the New Testament and see if instrumental music was a part of worship in the first century. The New Testament contains ten passages which will plainly answer our question. Notice each one of these verses very carefully:

1. *"And when they had **sung** an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives"* (Matthew 26:30).
2. Mark 14:26 says the same as Matthew 26:30.
3. *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and **sang** praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them"* (Acts 16:25).
4. *"And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and **sing** unto thy name"* (Romans 15:9).
5. *"What is it then ? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will **sing** with the spirit, and I*

- will **sing** with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).
6. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).
 7. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).
 8. "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will **sing** praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:12).
 9. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, **the fruit of our lips** giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).
 10. "Is any among you afflicted: let him pray. Is any merry: let him **sing** psalms" (James 5:13).

After studying these passages, the honest person must confess that we read about only singing (vocal music) in the New Testament. No one can cite a passage which mentions the piano, organ, or any other kind of instrument being used by the church. The reason for this is simple: **the churches of Christ did not use an instrument! Christians just sang!** Therefore, we must conclude that instrumental music in Christian worship is from man and not from God. As a matter of fact, the instrument was not added to so-called Christian worship until hundreds of years after the church began. The first organ introduced into worship of any body claiming to be Christian was 670 years after Christ. Pope Vitilian tried this, but it threatened or caused division in the Roman Catholic church and was removed to preserve unity. Eight hundred years after Christ, the organ was reintroduced into the Roman Catholic worship over some opposition. The Greek Catholic church refused it and still refuses it today.

All of us should be able to plainly see that the instrument was not used in the worship of the church which Jesus built. The New Testament does not authorize it and secular history teaches us that the instrument was not introduced until hundreds of years after Christ.

Before concluding this study I want to consider one particular argument which is used most often by individuals who try to defend the instrument in Christian worship. Many ask, "Was not the instrument used in the Old Testament?" The answer to this question

is yes. For example, Psalm 150 mentions a number of different instruments that were to be used in praising God. However, just because something was practiced under the Old Testament law does not mean it is to be practiced under the New Covenant. If I asked why you do not offer animal sacrifices or burn incense in worship today you would answer, "Animal sacrifices and burning of incense were part of the Old Testament worship." Your answer would be absolutely correct, because we no longer live under the Mosaic Law (Romans 7:4-7; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11; Colossians 2:14). What we do in worship today must be found in the law of Christ. There is just as much authority for offering animal sacrifices and burning incense in Christian worship as there is for the instrument.

The instrument cannot be found in the worship of the first century church. Christians were commanded to sing (vocal music). Let's be satisfied with God's way. Jesus said, *"God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24).

I Am A Debtor

ROY DUNAVIN

*"I am a debtor...
I am ready...
I am not Ashamed..."*
(Romans 1:14-16)

PAUL SAID LATER, *"Owe no man anything, save to love one another"* (Romans 13:8). Paul recognized an eternal debt of love that could never be repaid because of the grace of God bestowed upon him. He recognized he was lost and without hope. *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* (Romans 7:24). *"But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)"* (Ephesians 2:4, 5).

Any man who understands this will feel the same responsibility. He will say with Paul, *"For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

God had lifted Paul from the wallowing in the mire of chapter 7 of Romans, and had elevated him to the position he now holds

in Romans chapter 8. God had adopted him as His son, justified him, made him as though he had never sinned, revealed His will unto him, given him an inheritance, made him a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, and had sealed him with His Holy Spirit.

Every child of God has received these same blessings. If we would contrast our former condition with the present, we would say with Paul, ***"I am a debtor, and I am ready."***

IF A MAN HAS NOT HEARD THE GOSPEL, IS HE LOST?

DEMAR ELAM

SOME PEOPLE SAY, "If a man has not heard the Gospel, he is not lost." This kind of thinking is why we have not evangelized the world in our day. Many say, "Surely, if God is a loving God, He would not hold one who has not even heard what to do to be saved eternally responsible." Let us realize that God and man do not always view matters exactly alike.

One must realize that man is not lost because he has not heard the Gospel, but because he is a sinner. Paul said in Romans 3:10, *"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one."* *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). ALL men need the blood of Christ applied to their lives to be saved. *"... without the shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). Peter stated, *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ ..."* (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The blood of Christ was shed to save all men from their sins. However, it is not until all of God's requirements are met that a man receives the blessings of that atoning blood.

We have long taught, and rightly so, that one receives the benefits of the blood by believing (Hebrews 11:6), repenting (Luke 13:3), confessing (Matthew 10:32,33; Romans 10:9,10), and by being baptized into Christ's death, where His blood was shed (Romans 6:3-8). These are the essential steps which finalize the "New Birth" spoken of in John 3:1-13. Can the man who has not heard be saved in heaven without experiencing the "New Birth?" If Jesus was correct (and He was), then one **cannot** be saved without the new birth, because Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Did Jesus really mean this, or is the man saved who has not heard?

The saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47), and Christ is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). The one who has not heard the Gospel is not a part of the church, the saved.

Baptism is required if a man is to put on Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*"

Men should be careful about saying so readily that God is being unfair to punish people for their sins even though they have not heard. God has the divine prerogative and responsibility to deal with sinners as justice and righteousness demand.

Mankind imagines that sin is not bad enough for one to lose his soul over. Man views sin through human eyes, not through holy eyes, as God does. God is a righteous God (Psalm 89:14; Jeremiah 23:5-8). Righteousness and justice demand that sinners be punished. Because of His divinity, God could not overlook one unrequited sin without ceasing to be God.

The cure for man's sinful state is the gift of His only begotten Son on the cruel cross of Calvary. That cure has been provided by a loving and merciful God.

Let us try to illustrate, in this way, the condition of a man who has not heard of God's provision for his salvation: Suppose a man has a terrible disease, and a cure has been provided for this disease, but the man does not have access to the cure. He dies! Did he die because he did not have access to the cure, or because he had the disease? To draw a parallel, those who say that the man who has not heard the Gospel is *saved* would say that the diseased man *actually did not die*, or that he died solely because *he did not have access to the cure*. But that is not the case at all. He died because of *the disease* he had. If the people who have not heard the Gospel are lost, it will not be because they have not heard of the cure (the Gospel), but because of the disease (sin) they have.

Why did Jesus give the apostles a commission to preach the Gospel to every creature? If people are saved *because* they have never heard the Gospel, the Lord made a mistake in giving the commission because *many who do hear will reject the message, thus sealing their doomed state*. Dare we accuse God of sending out a message of damnation?

No; men are not lost because they have not heard, but *because*

they are sinners. In that sinful state, they are not a part of that group which comprises the saved, the church (or body) of Christ. This is why the commission was given. *Men are lost until they accept Christ and receive the benefit of His blood in their lives.*

What Is Our Mission?

ALBERT GARDNER

THE CHURCH IS divine and has a divine mission. A clearly defined purpose prevents misunderstanding, promotes the work we are to do, and helps us not to lose sight of our objective. It seems clear that many have lost their way. They stay busy, but still fail to do what is divinely appointed.

The devil is not afraid of a busy church as long as it is not saving souls! As one reads the inspired history of the church in the book of Acts, one is impressed with the work of the apostles and early preachers. As they left one city to go to another city to preach the Gospel, they had a burning desire to teach more people.

Their purpose, as they went, was to make disciples by teaching them and baptizing them (Matthew 28:19). It was this deep belief that people were lost and the Gospel would save them that moved the great apostle Paul to go preaching to the entire world. When there was opposition, he did not give up. At Corinth the Lord told Paul not to be afraid, but to speak the Word, *"for I have much people in this city"* (Acts 18:10).

Why do we think our mission is any different? The gospel preaching that turned the world upside down, when softened and weakened, will be ineffective. Can you imagine Paul's going into a city like Athens, where his spirit was stirred because they were given over to idolatry, and announcing his first lecture as "How To Feel Good About Yourself," and for the next three nights lecturing on the "Psychology Of How To Get Along In A Pagan World"?

On the mission field, when souls are not being taught and won, it is easy to turn to social projects. These are not wrong and do have their place, unless they are used to replace the direct preaching of the Gospel. When the apostles preached and people obeyed, churches were started, and they were off to another city to repeat the process.

The mission of Christ is summed up in Luke 19:10: *"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* This is our purpose, too. Everything we do should contribute to this purpose. We must not get involved in some less important project, or think that being busy is the same as being approved.

Jesus told the apostles to go teach all nations, baptizing believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then He adds, *"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."* One thing He had just commanded was *"to teach all nations."* This is how the Great Commission becomes **our** duty. As long as there is even one person in any nation of the world who has not been taught the saving Gospel, we have not finished our job.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20). *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15, 16).

A "Great" Passage

DAVID THURMAN

MEL GIBSON'S RECENT movie, *"The Passion of the Christ,"* has stirred much discussion among religious, and even non-religious, people all over the world. Many have criticized the film for various reasons. Others have applauded it. Most who have seen the film, believers and non-believers alike, have been moved by it.

Whatever your opinion is about this movie, one good side effect of all this is that there is renewed discussion of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. People all over the world are asking questions about who He was, what He did, and whether or not He was really what He claimed to be. This interest in the nature of Jesus is not new. The same sorts of questions were being asked when Jesus was alive. In a great passage, Jesus talks with His disciples, and we can learn some great lessons.

THE GREAT QUESTION

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'" (Matt. 16:13). Jesus had at this time been active in preaching and ministry for many months. His followers have seen Him do great things and have heard wonderful sermons from Him. Now, Jesus asks them directly what people are saying about Him. This is still a great question for our time.

Who is Jesus? If He is the Son of God, then the entire world should come to Him. If He is not the Son of God, the world should reject Him outright as one of the best hoaxsters in history. This question was being answered all over the middle east when Jesus was alive. It is still a question you need to answer. Who do you think Jesus is?

Jesus claims to be the Son of Man, the Son of God: that is, the Christ. He claims to be the servant of God sent to die for the sins of the world. He claimed to be raised from the dead. If this is true, your answer to this great question is easy. You need to put your faith in Him.

THE GREAT CONFUSION

"And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets'" (Matt. 16:14). The disciples seemed to be in touch with what people were saying about Jesus. They offer many opinions that were being discussed by the crowds. As they list the options, they reflect the confusion of Jesus' society. While people were certainly interested in Jesus, they were sadly confused.

This great confusion has not left us, either. Even today people are still confused about Jesus. Some demote Him to prophet status. Others limit Him to being a great philosopher, but nothing more. Still others consider Him a fraud. Depending on where you are and whom you ask, you can still get a lot of different answers about Jesus.

The interesting thing is that Jesus is not disturbed by all of this confusion. He is not bothered by the fact that many people had misunderstood Him and His mission. He even counts on His disciples to know what is going on and what is being said. Such confusion today should not bother us, either. Nor should we cut ourselves off from the world in which we live. Like the disciples, we need to know what others are saying about Jesus.

THE GREAT CONFESSION

"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt. 16:15-16). Jesus has heard what others are saying, so He asks a direct question of His followers. Peter speaks up, probably reflecting what all of the apostles were thinking. He offers the great confession, the first time man confessed faith in Jesus as God's Son.

This was no small step for Peter. The Jews had watched for the Messiah for centuries. Many charlatans had come claiming to be the Messiah. Even when the real thing did come, there was confusion about who He was, as we just noticed. So Peter, and the other disciples, take a great step of faith in confessing Jesus.

This confession is still great today. When a person comes to God and confesses faith in Jesus as His Son, wonderful things still happen. Trusting in Him, turning from sin to Him, being baptized into His name—all of these things are part of the process of confessing Jesus. As you express your faith, turn from your sins and are then immersed, you are confessing to the whole world that you believe in Jesus as the Christ, just as Peter did on this occasion.

THE GREAT PROMISE

"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church'" (Matt. 16:17-18). Jesus responds to Peter's confession with a great promise. The promise is not built on Peter, but on the confession he has just made. Jesus gives credit to God for His plan to show Peter and the world who Jesus really is. Then the Lord tells Peter about the church that will be built on the truth contained in that confession.

This is a wonderful promise. The church is not some building in the neighborhood. The church is not some institution that is organized to keep people religious. The church was and is the body of believers who have made that great confession. The promise is that all who come to Jesus in faith and obedience will become part of that church.

This church will not be built by man. It will not be sustained by man. It is the church of Jesus Christ and He builds it. He insures that it will survive and thrive. This great promise allows each of us

to be part of a loving, forgiving group of people. All of us are equal, since all of us came out of sin to be saved by Jesus. Once saved, we all, each one of us, were added to the church by the Lord. That was His promise then. It is still His promise now.

THE GREAT VICTORY

"Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not overpower it" (Matt. 16:18b). When Jesus made the great promise about the coming church, He added the promise of the ultimate victory. When Jesus built His church, He promised that Satan would not be able to defeat the church. Since it is Jesus who will establish the church, it will be Jesus who insures that the church will succeed.

Notice that Satan cannot stop this. Gates in the ancient history were designed to keep the enemy out. That is, city gates were always defensive in nature. Jesus says that Satan will not be able to keep the church from overpowering his defenses. The church is not on the defensive, it is on the attack, taking back from Satan the souls which he had won.

This is such a wonderful victory. We no longer are slaves to sin. We are no longer citizens of Satan's kingdom. Instead, we are now part of a process that will bring the victory to God and to His people. While individuals and churches may go off the deep end by becoming legalistic or liberal, the good news is that the church will ultimately succeed in the battle with Satan. Jesus promises us that.

THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Many scholars have debated the meaning of this verse. But whatever conclusion we draw one thing is sure: Jesus gave His followers great responsibility as they labor in the new kingdom. Jesus gives to His followers a responsibility that is awesome in scope. It is awesome in consequences.

This is an important principle. Coming to Jesus and confessing Him is not just a matter of having your sins removed. Making the great confession by faith and immersion means you are turning your life over to Jesus. It means you are taking on the duties and obligations of being a member of His church. It means you accept the awesome responsibility that comes with being a disciple. Too

many of us want the salvation, but not the responsibility. Too many want a Savior, but not a Lord. When Jesus commenced the disciples for their faith, He also gave them grave responsibilities that come with their faith.

THE GREAT DECISION

Will you choose today? If Jesus is who He says He is, you need to do what Peter and countless millions have done. You need to put your trust in Him, turn from your life of sin, and be baptized into the name of Jesus. This is the most important choice you can ever make. It is the great decision each person must make. Do not delay, come to Jesus—today!

IF I AM SAVED

JOHNNY RAMSEY

WHAT A WONDERFUL thing it will be at the Judgment day to hear those blessed words, *"Enter into the joys of the Lord."* Good and faithful servants of the Savior can look forward to such words of comfort and expressions of peace for all eternity. A powerful hymn has these thoughts:

*All that I am and have,
Thy gifts so free,
In joy, in grief, through life,
Dear Lord for Thee.
And when thy face I see,
My ransomed soul shall be
Through all eternity,
Something for Thee!*

To stand before our Maker in that final hour is an awesome point to ponder. If we are saved, that moment will be sublime beyond measure. What shall have contributed to that wondrous joy when the saints go marching in to everlasting peace? Since salvation, with eternal glory, is *"in Christ"* (2 Tim. 2:10), we must live and die in the Lord in order to be saved: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). God sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). Christ is *"the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). If, in that final moment, I am forever redeemed, it will be due to the fact that I lived and died in the Lord (Rev. 14:13).

A great Bible passage gets our attention, *"I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: So shall I be saved from mine enemies"* (2 Sam. 22:4). So many people fit the sentiment of Jer. 8:20, *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."* But, by God's grace, it should not have to be! We can choose the way of Truth, as Psa. 119:30 declares. Sadly, though, to follow error is the path millions pursue. Our sin and shame can all be erased by the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary.

If I am saved, it will be due to the dynamic power of the gospel, *"The power of God unto salvation"* (Rom. 1:16). The good news - yes, the gospel or glad tidings - of the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah (Isa. 53) gives us hope beyond the grave: *"In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal"* (Titus 1:2). As a great hymn describes it:

*In the land of fadeless day,
Lies the city four square;
It shall never pass away,
And there is no night there.*

If I am saved, somebody cared for my soul. The heavenly Father made provision for my redemption. Jesus died to make it possible. Somebody loved me enough to tell me the glorious gospel and heaven rejoiced because I was delivered out of the bondage of Satan and into the joyous freedom Christ provides (John 8:36). Lam. 3:26 is a blessing on this precious topic: *"It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* Showers of blessings reminds us of another great passage, *"And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing"* (Ezek. 34:26).

If we are saved, it means that God provided a **Savior**, an **Example**, a genuine **Hope** that will propel us toward **Heaven**. The matchless bliss of eternal life awaits us. If we are saved, we owe an everlasting gratitude.

"Where Never Is Heard..."

DALTON KEY

One of the more interesting and inspirational characters of the New Testament was a man named Joseph. You probably know him better by his other name, the one he was given by the apostles:

"Joseph... was surnamed by the apostles, Barnabas (which means, son of Encouragement)" (Acts 4:36).

Joseph did a good job living up to his new name. Not long after Paul's conversion, when Paul was yet known as Saul, a man much feared and mistrusted by the disciples, it was Barnabas who stood by Saul's side, encouraging his acceptance as a fellow believer (Acts 9:26,27).

Sometime later, Barnabas did for a young man named John Mark what he had earlier done for Paul. On their first missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul took John Mark with them, only to see him turn back and return home shortly after the journey began. When the time came for Barnabas and Paul to make plans for a second mission, Barnabas insisted, even against Paul's strong objections, that John Mark be given another opportunity (Acts 15:39,40).

Yes, Barnabas was the perfect name for Joseph. He was a perennial encourager, someone who sought out, found, and reinforced the best in those around him. He used his words wisely, as tools for helping, for building up.

And in so doing, this "Son of Encouragement" was busy living what the Scriptures require of all of us: *"Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Ephesians 4:29). *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"* (Hebrews 3:13).

Do you wish to be a benefit both to the Lord and to those you know? Be a Barnabas! Be an encourager!

THE WISE MAN, SOLOMON, ACTED FOOLISHLY

MAXIE B. BOREN

EVERY STUDENT OF the Bible knows that *"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much"* (1 Kings 4:29). So wise was he that the Queen of Sheba, upon hearing of Solomon's wisdom, came to Jerusalem to see for herself, and said to Solomon, *"However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was NOT TOLD ME. Your wisdom*

and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard" (1 Kings 10:7 NKJV).

However, like all other human beings, Solomon was not perfect, and being tempted, committed sin. God had warned His people not to intermarry with the heathen people that inhabited Canaan land (Exodus 34:11-16), nor to take multiple wives (Deuteronomy 17:17), lest their hearts be turned away from God. Yet, Solomon did both of these things. He allowed himself to be enamored with many heathen women and contracted marriages with them. Just as God had warned, *"his wives turned away his heart"* (1 Kings 11:1-10). In all this, Solomon acted foolishly!

There is no way I can overstress the importance of a person prayerfully and carefully seeking just the "right one" to be his/her lifelong companion in marriage. Who a person marries is so very important! Every Christian young person must be taught that marriage is a lifelong commitment of one man and one woman (Matthew 19:3-6; Romans 7:2,3).

While we admire Solomon's wisdom throughout much of his life, a Christian must avoid the foolish mistakes he made in this matter. This was his downfall (1 Kings 11:11).

What Does It Mean To "Swear Not?"

CECIL MAY, JR.

JESUS SAID, "Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be 'yes, yes,' 'no, no.' Anything more than this comes from evil" (Matthew 5:34-37).

The Epistle of James contains more statements similar to Jesus' recorded sayings than any other epistle. It says, *"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no, that you may not fall under condemnation" (James 5:12).*

Jesus' word about oaths comes in that section of the Sermon on the Mount in which what *"you have heard was said to men of old"* is contrasted with what *"I say to you"*. *"Swear not"* is contrasted with the *"old"* saying, *"You shall not perjure yourself, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn"* (Matthew 5:33).

The Old Testament, in the passage to which the Lord was probably referring, says, *"You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord"* (Leviticus 19:11).

Some of the Jewish religious leaders had built a theology of technicalities around the matter of oaths. An oath by the gold of the temple or by the gift of the altar was a binding oath, but an oath on the temple or the altar was not (Matthew 23:16-22). Obviously, a point of all that was to fool the uninitiated into thinking they had been promised something under a binding oath when in fact they had not, sort of like the childish custom of taking back a promise because, "I had my fingers crossed".

Jesus' point is, "Always tell the truth, even in your simple word, not just when you swear or make an oath."

Discussion of this passage frequently centers around whether a Christian may take a legal oath in court or in other official instances. Other things said in the Bible about oaths, and the context of Jesus' statement, indicate it was not Jesus' intention to forbid all kinds of oath taking.

The point of legal oaths is that, by state and federal law, perjury (lying under oath) is punishable by law, and simple lying is not. In legal matters, therefore, one is asked to put oneself in the position of being subject to legal penalties for not telling the truth. That is a legitimate state interest.

The Jewish high priest was administering just such an oath to Jesus at His trial when he said, *"I adjure you by the living God that you tell me the truth, whether you are the Christ, the Son of God"* (Matthew 26:63). Jesus responded with an affirmative answer.

Paul used language by which one binds oneself with an oath on two different occasions (2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20). God bound Himself with an oath to keep His promises to Abraham (Genesis 22:16,17; Hebrews 6:13-18).

THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT TO MISS WHAT JESUS IS EMPHASIZING

To say "I swear by... (whatever)" implies, "Since I am swearing, you can rely on my word". But that suggests further that without an oath my word is not necessarily reliable. As disciples of Jesus, who is Himself the Truth (John 14:6), we are to be truthful all of the time. Our "yes" or "no" should be just as binding as someone else's "swearing on a stack of a thousand Bibles".

One who ostentatiously refuses to take an oath in court on religious grounds but plays fast and loose with the truth in business dealings is missing the point of Jesus' teaching from both angles.

According to the Psalmist, one mark of a man acceptable to God was, "*He swears to his own hurt and changes not*" (Psalm 15:4). If we state an intention to another and, then, in changed circumstances, find that to carry it out will be disadvantageous, we should fulfill our word anyway. At least we should be concerned, by explanation, to secure from those to whom we made the commitment a release to which they consent.

WE SHOULD CARE THAT MUCH ABOUT OUR WORD, BECAUSE JESUS DOES

When we tell someone we will do something, or be somewhere, we should do it. "Come fire or high water", even if something else comes up we would rather do.

When we tell someone we will pay a debt by a certain date, we should pay when promised. If unexpected events make it impossible, we should at least be there on time to apologize and to say when we will meet our obligation.

Whether on our income tax return, in representing the condition of something we are selling, in agreeing to help someone, or reporting something that has happened, we should tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

There used to be a saying about honorable men, "Their word is their bond." When Jesus said, "*Let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no*", He was saying, "Let your word be your bond".

Work That Lasts For Eternity

JACK HARRIMAN

IN THE EARLY days of World War II, Winston Churchill called Britain's coal miners together. A great crisis had arisen. The miners were not getting out enough coal to fuel the factories that produced the planes, ships, etc., so desperately needed.

When the Prime Minister arose he said, "I want to give it to you straight—nothing! Two hundred guns, no more! Twenty tanks, that's all! I heard he (Hitler) was coming with a million men, and I said to myself, 'The British Navy will put five hundred thousand of them to the bottom of the channel, but what will we do with half a million

of them ashore?"

For an hour and forty minutes he outlined the desperate situation confronting Britain. Then in stirring language he said, "When at last it is all over, we'll parade these streets again and as you go by people will call out, 'And where were you?' Someone will answer, 'I marched with the Eighth Army,' and someone else will say, 'I was in the skies over Britain.' Another will reply, 'I was in the Merchant Marines pushing the ships through the sea up to Archangel.' Then I shall be standing there and I will call out, 'Where were you?' I will hear you answer, 'We were down in the black pits right up against the face of the coal.'"

Then, thousands of coal miners arose and with tears streaming down their faces, cheered the Prime Minister, and the coal came out! They had caught a fresh vision of the importance of their work.

When at last it is all over for us, we will parade the streets of Heaven. And it may be that someone will call out, "And where were you?" Many impressive answers may be given, but none more satisfying than to say, "I was in _____ teaching the Gospel of Christ."

"And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

True Worship Offered By True People

DANNY CLINE

"WORTH-SHIP" reveals the worth, honor, value, and respect placed on the object of worship. If the true and living God of the Bible is to be revered, only that which is worthy will be accepted. Equally, the worshiper must also be true (John 4:23).

A Samaritan woman, whom Jesus Christ taught, was used to untrue worship, making her (the worshiper) untrue, though the worship act was correct — "*you worship*", Jesus affirmed. Worship here is *proskuneo* — "to kiss toward"; but the object of her kiss was incorrect — "*you worship that which you do not know*". Worship (the physical act) happened; acceptable worship (the act plus the right object, and done with the right attitude) did not happen (John 4:20-22). Worship must be done in truth and in spirit (verse 24).

In a worship context, some Greeks in Thessalonica had "*turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*" (1 Thessalonians

1:9). This “serve” word differs from the previous one in that it is “to serve as a slave”. Implying deep humility, these people who formerly bowed to idols now served the true God. Having humbled themselves before untrue gods, they were now in the service of the true God. Their attitude was extremely important, originally misplaced, now well placed, previously well intentioned but wrong, now well-pleasing.

Along with humbleness, the attitude of true worship is seen in reverence and respect. Though idol worshipers may have the right attitude, as did those in Ephesus, their worship is false because their god is false (Acts 19:27).

Another word (*threskeia*) is used in the New Testament to illustrate the outer form of worship, “religious worship”. This formality can be applied even to the worship of angels, which is forbidden (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 2:8, 9).

Physical acts of worship, even when done with utmost dedication, do not fully constitute acceptable worship to Almighty God. The **attitude** must be worthy of the one receiving the honor of this act done in **gratitude** (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 12:28). Jesus said, *“I speak the truth, but ... you do not understand what I am saying ... because you cannot hear My word. He who is of God hears the words of God ... I honor My Father ... and keep His word”* (selective phrases from John 8:45,43, 47,49,55). Honoring God, in showing our appreciation of His worth, is rooted in **listening to Him and keeping His Word**.

This attitude of gratitude will not insist on its own freedom to worship God in the way that pleases *me*. To insist that God change His “musts” is to open the door to every imaginable “act” of worship from any good-intentioned, though unacceptable worshiper. The discussion that the Son of God had with the Samaritan woman—a person who was seemingly humble, curious, well informed about worship in general, who thought that worship was mostly a matter of form, and whose history included deep loyalty to her ancestors’ ideas of presenting oneself to the God they worshiped—was summarized by the Christ with unalterable “musts” that must be practiced. *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). **Without exception, worship must be to God’s liking:** *“...for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers”* (verse 23).

True worship is offered by true people to the true God, according to the truth in His Word, The Bible.

