

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 49

March 2019

No. 11

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

The One God Is Three Persons

OVER THE YEARS THERE have been many distortions of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, which is the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three distinct spiritual Persons in one Godhead. The word "Godhead" or the "Divine Nature" appears in the New Testament three times in Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. It simply means "that which is divine." There are various Bible references that indicate that there are three divine Personalities that are eternal and are identified as God, Christ, and Holy Spirit. The English word God is the translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is a plural of the Majesty. The plural form "Elohim" carrying with it the actual meaning of the Godhead appears more than three thousand times in the Old Testament. This means *that in most cases when the English reader reads the word God in the Bible in singular sense, the scriptures are actually referring to the Godhead, in the plural sense.* For instance, when in Genesis 1:1 we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", translated literally from Hebrew, in the language Moses wrote, it would read, "In the beginning Gods created...." For this is how the plural word Elohim would read. There was a plurality of divine beings in the beginning when this creation was perfected. This is evidently clear as we read in Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, **Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....**" a plurality of persons being used. The Godhead



was present "In the beginning." God was behind the whole creation planning it (Hebrews 1:1); Christ, the Son, was present (John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:16-17); and the Holy Spirit was present (Genesis 1:1-2). Throughout the Old Testament the idea of a plural God is present in the word Elohim, used for God in its pages, but in the New Testament it is made clear that the Elohim, the plural God or the Godhead is composed of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Luke 4:18; John 5:17; 8:16; 13:3; 16:7, 27, 28; Acts 2:33; 10:38; etc.) The apostle Paul, in Romans 15:30, asked the brethren at Rome to pray for him and mentioned the Godhead. The Godhead is also mentioned in the apostle's benediction to the church at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Yet, there are some who are teaching the false doctrine that there is only one Person in the Godhead, revealing Himself in three different ways; as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence they deny the biblical doctrine of Trinity and teach that Jesus is the only God; that He alone is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They believe these are only three different titles of the same Person. They go so far as to teach that all those who have been baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19, must be baptized again in the name of Jesus only to be saved!

Surely, the Bible definitely teaches that there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4). But the Bible also teaches, as already observed, that the one true God exists in three distinct Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is not playing three different roles one after the other, but He exists eternally and simultaneously in the three fold relationship. This is not to say that there are three Gods in one, but there is only one God or Godhead in which there are three distinct spiritual Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; all are of the same substance—literally character (Hebrews 1:1-3). They are infinite in being, omnipotent, omniscient and everywhere present. The unity of the Godhead consists not in the unity of purpose only, but in the common nature, in the sameness of Divine Nature. We witness all of these three relating to one another at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17, where we observe, first, "Jesus came up immediately from the water," second, "the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him," third, "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."" Here we clearly observe the three divine Persons of the Trinity together. But someone objects

by saying, "the Bible never uses the word Trinity, therefore we shouldn't." The truth is, the Bible never uses the word "Bible" either. However, in both cases the idea is in the scripture, so the words can't be wrong. The term "Trinity" is not a biblical term, that is, it does not appear in the New Testament, but it is a biblical concept. When Christ gave, what we rightly call, the "Great Commission" (again, not a biblical phrase but biblical concept) to His disciples, He sent them to make disciples of all nations by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), the command is given by the authority of each of these three Divine Persons in the Godhead.

Also, some verses of the scriptures make no sense unless God is triune. According to John 14:16, 17, to His disciples Christ said, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." The question is, how could the Father send another Helper, other than Jesus, if the other Helper is also Jesus? Again, in Mark 13:32 Christ said, that neither the angels in heaven nor the Son knows the day of His coming, but only the Father knows. What a gross lie that would be if He and the Father were the same Person! And is it not mockery for Jesus to cry, as we read in Matthew 27:46, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" if He Himself were the Father?

To speak of three eternal and divine Persons in the one Godhead is to recognize the relationship that exists between the three in the divine nature. God, the Father, Word, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Who is also called the Helper (John 14:26; 16:7). The three Persons of the Godhead are one true God, the Elohim, Who created in the beginning the heavens and the earth and together accomplished the work of salvation of man. Of course, in accomplishing the work of salvation of humanity there is implicated a certain relative subordination in the modes of operating of different Persons, by which it is the Father Who sent the Word, the Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the world; and the Son, when He, after His propitiatory death, burial and resurrection, returned to the Father for the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), sent the Spirit to apply His redemption to men. (John 14: 25-26; 16:5-15; Acts 1:1-8; Acts 2:1-4). Yet, the three Persons of the Godhead are uniformly represented in the Scriptures as in their essential nature each alike God over all.



WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

J.C. Choate

A FEW PEOPLE IN THE world today might never have heard the name, Jesus Christ. Most have. But many who have heard of Him are confused and do not know who He really is. Millions believe in Him, but millions more do not. *Who is Jesus Christ?*

Jesus Christ existed with God in the beginning. Hebrews 1:3 describes Him as being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. John 1:1, calling Him "the Word", says that He was *with* God in the beginning, and that He was God. This means that *He is one of the Persons of the Godhead, along with God and the Holy Spirit*. God is described as being eternal, having no beginning and no end, so that same is true of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 63:16). He is said to be the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), the beginning [or, the initiator] of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14), the first and the last (Revelation 22:13).

Jesus Christ was the creator of all things. In Genesis 1:1 we read that "*in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" The Hebrew word for God is the plural form, which includes the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "*Let us make man in our image...*" Paul further explained in Colossians 1:16-17, speaking of Jesus Christ, "*All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*"

Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary through the power of God, having no earthly father. His unique birth was prophesied many centuries before by the prophet Isaiah: "*Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel.*" In Matthew 1:20,21 it was said, "... *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" From these verses we can see that Jesus was born miraculously, that He was more than just a man.

Jesus Christ was the Son of God, having emptied Himself of the rights and powers inherent in the Godhead, He subjected Himself

to God as Father, and became a brother to humans by His physical birth (Philippians 2:3-8). He came into the world to save man from his sins. We read in John 3:16-17, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."* Christ Himself said, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

Jesus Christ died on the cross so that all who believe in Him might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. We read the words of the apostle Paul, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 1:1-4).

Jesus Christ promised to save the obedient in His family, which he called 'My church' (Matthew 16:18). He died for this body of people, and all those who are washed in His blood are saved and added to His church. It is called His body, of which He is the head. It is also described as His bride, wearing His name, the church of Christ. (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 5:23,25; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 3:15; Acts 4:12). One day He will come back for that saved body of people.

Jesus Christ is the second person in the Godhead (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) (Matthew 28:19-20). There is one God, one Lord (Christ), and the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) (Ephesians 4:1-6). Christ has all authority in heaven and on the earth (Matthew 28:18). He is presently sitting at the right hand of the Father, reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). One day He will come again to take His people, the church, to heaven where they will dwell forevermore. *"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Jesus promised, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for*

you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Do you believe in Christ? He warned in John 8:24, "...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." If we do believe in Him we will obey Him (Mark 16:16), and will remain faithful to Him until death (Revelation 2:10). Jesus also warned, "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – **the word that I have spoken** will judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48).

What JESUS Said About The Church

Justin Rogers

MANY SKEPTICS MAINTAIN that the apostles established the church as a last-ditch effort to give meaning to their belief system. Their delusional master had gotten Himself killed, leaving them with the question, "Now what?" They invented stories about His resurrection to fool and to maintain control over His followers. Any open-minded reading of the Scriptures, however, disproves such a skeptical reconstruction of history.

Jesus recognized His ministry as a period of transition. He understood His death was required to inaugurate the New Covenant, "For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Hebrews 9:17). Thus, the New Covenant would not come—indeed, could not come—within Jesus' lifetime but only after His death. As Jesus looked forward to that time, He offered important teachings about the church.

The Kingdom Of God

The language of the "kingdom" is taken directly from the Old Testament. The Messianic hope included the promise of a kingdom (Isaiah 9:7), which was itself the fulfillment of God's promise to David (2 Samuel 7:16). The book of Daniel, however, most often uses "kingdom" language, the terms for "kingdom" being found 57 times in just 12 chapters. Perhaps the most important of these passages is the prophecy of Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Early Christians understood “the days of these kings” to refer to the Romans and the “kingdom” to refer to the church. Many Jews at the time of Jesus were eagerly anticipating the kingdom of God because Old Testament prophecies led them to believe that God would do something wonderful in their lifetime (Mark 15:43). According to Josephus, this is the very reason the Jews initiated the Great Revolt against the Romans (Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.312).

The prophetically charged excitement about God's kingdom explains the frequency of the expression in the New Testament. Phrases such as “kingdom of God,” “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom” occur 160 times in the New Testament. The term “kingdom” is not always used in reference to the church, but it does refer in general to the reign of God. Apparently beginning with John the Baptist (Matthew 11:12; Luke 16:16), the kingdom was already present during the ministry of Jesus (Luke 11:20; 17:21). But there is a sense in which the kingdom would not come within the lifetime of Christ, and hence would be fulfilled in the church (Matthew 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 10:11). Still, some scriptures give reason to believe the kingdom is still to come (1 Corinthians 15:24; 2 Timothy 4:18). For the entirety of its history, the kingdom has been described as “already” and “not yet.”

Let us note that the term “kingdom” is never used after the Gospel for those outside of the church (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5). Indeed, one must be baptized in order to gain entrance to the kingdom (Acts 8:12). Even Christ recognized there was an “in” and an “out” of the kingdom (Matthew 7:21); thus we recognize that some will not submit themselves to the reign of God (Revelation 11:15; 12:10). Christ will ultimately purge the kingdom of sinners and reward the righteous (Matthew 13:41).

The Church of Christ

The term “kingdom” communicates God's reign from a prophetic perspective. The term “church,” by contrast, more specifically describes God's people. In the Gospel, Jesus used the term “church” only three times in two verses (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). We may assume He more frequently chose the broader term “kingdom” both because of its prophetic connections and because the church as such had not yet been established. Jesus looked forward to its establishment and thus described the institution it ought to be. We shall treat the passages in reverse order.

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus addressed conflict resolution. His

three-step process begins with speaking to the brother privately (v. 15). If that should fail, take one or two others to resolve the conflict (v. 16). If that too should fail, the church is to be informed and is to confront the brother (v. 17).

Because the term "church" (*ekklesia*) can refer to a judicial "assembly" (Acts 19:39), some might suggest this passage simply refers to a Jewish court and has no implications for the church. But the verses immediately following empower the apostles to render judgments that shall have been rendered in heaven (Matthew 18:18-20). This language indicates Jesus is looking forward to the authority of the disciples in the future community of faith.

Matthew 16:18 is the second passage in which Jesus described the church. After a poll regarding the identity of the Son of Man among the Jewish people (vv. 13-14), Jesus more pointedly asked the apostles, "But who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). Peter responded with the remarkable declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus then blessed Peter and declared of the church: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). Several important lessons can be drawn from these words about the church:

- **Its foundation.** Note that Jesus does not make Peter (*petros*) the foundation but the confession (*petra*) of His identity. Faith in Jesus as both "Lord and Christ" is what Christianity would be all about (Acts 2:36; Romans 10:17; 1 John 5:4).
- **Its preparation.** Note the future tense of the verb, "I will build," indicating that the building of the church lay in the future. Some do not grasp this truth, arguing that the church came into existence within or before the lifetime of Jesus. Christ clearly declared the church to be a future reality.
- **Its possession.** Note that the institution is "my church," Christ declared. The church belongs to Christ because "He purchased [it] with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).
- **Its organization.** The term "church" is a relational word. One cannot have an assembly of one. Thus one cannot accept Christ and reject the church, for the body of Christ is the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).
- **Its determination.** "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Many brethren behave as though the existence of the church depends entirely on man. They worry themselves sick with false teachers whom God will punish (Revelation 2:23). They fear the church is losing size and

influence when God promised neither (13:7-8). Although man is empowered to reach the lost and to enlarge the borders of the church (Matthew 28:18-20), the church will survive in spite of man's efforts because it is the church of Christ built by the living God.

Conclusion

Jesus made preparations for the church just as David prepared for the building of the temple (1 Chronicles 22-29). Although neither saw these grand institutions built for the glory of God, both anticipated and orchestrated the events necessary for the establishment of God's dwelling (1 Kings 8:10-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

The church was planned "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Jesus participated in this plan by submitting Himself to death for our sake (Philippians 2:7-8; 1 Peter 1:20). As a result of His death, a new covenant was inaugurated (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:13). Jesus mediates this new covenant (9:15) and remains head of the church, the institution in which His people stand (Ephesians 1:22; Titus 2:14).

WHEN WAS SAUL SAVED?

Frank Chesser

PRIOR TO HIS CONVERSION, Saul (later called Paul) was an avowed enemy of Christ and Christianity. He described himself as doing "*many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 26:9). He was a "*blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious*" (1 Timothy 1:13).

However, on the road to Damascus, he met and acknowledged Jesus as Lord (Acts 9:1-6). Many people believe that Saul was saved at that point. But even a casual reading of the text will reveal that such is not the case. If Saul was saved at that very moment:

(1) **He didn't know that he was saved.** Instead of rejoicing in his salvation, he inquired of Jesus, "*What wilt thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). Whoever heard of a man being saved and yet not knowing it? Saul's very question is proof of his recognition that something remained for him to do in order to be saved by divine grace and blood.

(2) **Jesus Himself didn't know it.** Instead of informing Saul

that he was saved by his "faith only," Jesus instructed him to *"go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"* (Acts 9:6). Note the terms "must" and "do." Contrary to the thinking of many, man has to "do" something to be saved. That's not *human interpretation*; that's just what *Christ* said.

(3) Saul didn't act like a saved man. Instead of expressing great joy and happiness over his salvation, he was *"three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink"* (Acts 9:9). That's a strange way for a just-saved man to act. Saul knew he was not yet saved. He had asked what to do. Christ said he would be told, though giving him no specific time. Saul waited in darkness, in prayer and fasting for three anxious days.

(4) Ananias the preacher didn't know it. Instead of arguing that Saul was already saved by his "faith alone," he went to Saul and told him what he needed to do (Acts 22:12-16).

(5) He was saved while still in his sins, for God through Ananias told him to *"arise and be baptized."* He was still in his sins, for he had to be baptized to have his sins *"washed away."*

Why does Scripture connect baptism with the washing away of sins? Because of some special power in the water or in the act of baptism itself? God forbid! The power to wash away sins is in—and *only* in—the blood of Christ! But **when** is man cleansed by that blood? When he completes his obedience to the Gospel in the act of baptism. Baptism is the culminating act of obedience that puts one into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4) where Jesus shed His blood (John 19:33,34) in order that the penitent believer might have his sins washed away by that blood.

WHAT washes away sin? Only the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5).

WHEN does the blood of Christ wash away sins? When one completes his obedience to the Gospel in baptism (Acts 22:16).

Saul was not saved by grace and blood until his faith moved him to complete his obedience in this divinely ordained act.

What JESUS Said About Right Living

Doug Burleson

JESUS HAD A STRONG desire to speak the truth. In fact He told Peter and a group of His companions that He came to preach (Mark 1:38). But what did He preach about? Bibles printed with the words

of Jesus in red illustrate that although only two chapters of Mark's gospel account are wholly devoted to the content of Jesus' teaching (chapters 4 and 13), in the four canonical gospel accounts Jesus had much to say about right living.

Jesus Christ was qualified to speak about right living as the One who came as the light of men (John 1:5, 14) and who knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15) and God "anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" in His ministry (Acts 10:38 NASB). As a result of being "Jesus Christ the Righteous" (cf. 1 John 2:1). He made the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Even in His darkest hour, one of those who hung on the cross near Jesus could recognize the purity of His heart, declaring that He "[had] done nothing wrong," with the centurion also noting His innocence moments after His death (Luke 23:41, 47). As a result of His resurrection and glorification at the right hand of the Father, this same Jesus will one day "judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Thus, it should first be noted that everything Jesus said about right living was heard in the context of His life—a life lived right. Jesus not only *said* something about right living, He *showed* us something about right living even when the world wronged Him in so many ways.

But what did He say about right living? With John's recognition of the innumerable things Jesus said and did in mind (cf. John 21:25), one certainly must begin where Jesus addressed the crowd in Matthew 5-7. Readers cannot help to think about the occasion Jesus sat on this hillside to teach. By this point in Matthew's gospel, readers have learned much about Jesus. His lineage, His miraculous birth, the Father's confession at His baptism, His resisting temptation in the wilderness. His ministry beginning in power and compassion have made it clear that He is the righteous Savior and Lord who is worthy of our worship. He is the example in whose steps all should walk.

Yet every reader old enough to recognize sin surely struggles with not always being able to live in the same righteous manner He did. The words "blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) can remind readers of their own arrogance. The words "blessed are the gentle" (v. 5) stir remembrances of rudeness or insensitivity shown toward others. Jesus' admonition concerning the ones "who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (v. 6) bring many readers to confess that at times even the most devoted disciples must deny self-

righteous tendencies. The words "blessed are the merciful" (v. 7) bring many readers to admit failure in showing others the mercy that God has shown them. One can easily read through the beatitudes and be encouraged to hear Jesus' teaching concerning right living and still be discouraged in not being able to live as righteously as He lived.

The Root of Right Living: A Pure Heart

When readers come to Matthew 5:8, they encounter what might be the most difficult beatitude of all: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In the context of Jesus' message on the mount, at the end of Matthew 4:23-25 readers learn that large crowds had been following him. The crowd was made up of a variety of people from a number of places. The hearers of Jesus on that day had all sorts of problems and had come to the One who could help and hear them. Because in Matthew 5:1-2 Jesus took His disciples up on the mountain, likely He addressed here those already trying to follow Him, but later it seems in Matthew 7:28-29 the crowds mentioned at the end of chapter 4 were still present when Jesus finished speaking these words.

Readers also note that the crowds were amazed at His words for He was teaching them as one having authority. The crowd would have included those who were hungry for this authoritative teaching that went beyond stringing together quotes from well-known rabbis. Jesus' teaching about right living took them back to God's revealed Word. Jesus taught them what the righteous God of heaven expected of their lives. Readers today need to be reminded that what Jesus said and showed in that setting was perfect; the people in the crowd that heard Jesus were sinners. When they heard the master speak, He challenged their presuppositions about what God expected just as His words continue to challenge readers to right living today.

With regard to Jesus' challenging message about right living in Matthew 5:8, being "pure in heart" was not just about moral behavior or sexual purity. Being pure in heart was about people being the same on the inside as they were on the outside. They were not to be hypocrites. Notice Jesus did not say "blessed are the pure." Perhaps this was because He was not suggesting they were to be perfect in right living or merely ceremonially pure; instead He was instructing them to develop hearts that yearned to draw near to the holy God who desired to draw near to them. This blessing Jesus

spoke of was tied to their ability to be single-minded, with all their heart being set on one primary purpose.

Every Jew familiar with Psalms, the book Jesus quoted the most, would have likely recognized the phrase “pure in heart.” They likely knew from Psalm 24 that the one with clean hands and a pure heart would be the one who could ascend the holy hill and stand in His holy place (v. 4). Perhaps they could hear the echo of David’s prayer of lamentation in Psalm 51:10: “create in me a clean heart, O God.” Maybe some heard Jesus’ alluding to Psalm 73:1: “Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!”

Surely most knew that in Deuteronomy 6:5 they had been called to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and might. In effect they were being asked to consider who they were in the secrecy of their being where only God could see. How would that impact their living? Jesus’ concern was not primarily about cleaning up society but about changing the very core of individual people—their hearts. One would still be challenged to find any problem with right living in the modern world, culture and even the church, and deny that at its root the primary problem is a problem of the heart.

The Reward for Right Living: Seeing God

Perhaps the “seeing God” language shocked Jesus’ hearers too. Surely they knew what God had said to Moses in Exodus 33:20, that no one could see God’s face and live. But perhaps Jesus’ hearers and Matthew’s readers also noticed the future tense used here—“they *will* see God.” This result of their right living was to take place in the future.

These words ultimately reminded them that the pure in heart would reach the ultimate goal every believer is to have. As 1 John 3:2 reminds readers “we know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” Similarly, in Revelation 22:4 readers are told that the bondservants of God in the New Jerusalem will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads. Ultimately “they will see God” refers to one’s ability to stand before God in His final judgment, receive pardon by His grace, and be blessed by His mercy to live in eternity with Him in glory.

The crowd would have known their Old Testament Scripture. They would have known Jesus was not an average rabbi (though they certainly had not fully grasped His identity as God’s Son), but what else would they have known? They surely would have known their need for right living. They were not perfect, but they were

hearing the One who was perfect. Jesus was exemplifying what it meant to be pure in heart, i.e. to practice right living.

Readers of the New Testament know that Jesus has not changed (cf. Hebrews 13:8), but in many ways the needs of His hearers have not changed much either. Though much has changed over the last 2,000 years, the ultimate need for right living in a world where so much wrong exists is as strong now as ever. Right living begins with right thinking in the very core of who we are. On that mountain side, this diverse group of imperfect people from a variety of settings heard Jesus speak. In their diversity, they realized there was one objective standard for right living.

The things Jesus said about right living corresponded to His right living. Jesus commissioned His disciples to tell others about right living as revealed in God's Word. He desires that our words about right living be supported by the kinds of lives that we live as well. Let those who follow Christ commit to *say* to others what the Lord said about right living while also *showing* them by living the way He lived, even when wronged. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. May God's people seek to be pure in heart so that others might see God's standard for right living in the church.

What JESUS Said About Heaven, Hell and Judgment

David L. Lipe

ONE COULD HARDLY imagine a more sobering thought than the fact that one day we will all stand in judgment before the Lord. Unless the Lord returns during our lifetime, we will all die and after that face the judgment. Thus, all men must make these two appointments: death and judgment. Life is short, death is sure, and judgment is certain. Because of the significance of these realities, those inspired by the Holy Spirit spent a great deal of time discussing the afterlife. It is surprising to some, though it should not be, that Jesus Himself spent a significant amount of time preaching about heaven, hell and the judgment. Although many biblical writers addressed these profound themes, my purpose is to explore what Jesus had to say about them.

The Judgment

When will the judgment take place? We know it will take place when the Lord Jesus returns in all His glory; however, Jesus makes it clear that no one knows the time of the coming of the Son of man (Matthew 24:37). Although men have speculated as to when the Lord will return, no one knows. Jesus does give us some clues: "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (vv. 38-39 NKJV). In view of this, Jesus says to "watch" and "be ready" because we do not know when He will come (vv. 42,44).

Who will be the judge? Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31-32).

Who will be judged? Not only do the aforementioned verses make it clear that Jesus will be the judge, they also make it clear that "all nations" will be judged. No one will escape the judgment. Every person who has ever lived, who is now living and who will ever live will be judged. None will escape the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10).

On what basis will all men be judged? Speaking of His coming, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). Similarly, some of the Lord's parables demonstrate that each person will be judged according to his or her deeds. One has only to consider the parable of the talents (Math. 25:14-30) and the parable of the pounds/minas (Luke 19:11-27). Space is not available to quote them here, but they teach that all of God's servants have different abilities; all are responsible for what has been entrusted to them; and all will be rewarded based on their achievements or lack thereof.

How many verdicts will there be? Jesus makes it clear that there will be only two verdicts: either "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34) or "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). The former verdict will be for the saved, those who walk down the narrow

way and enter into the strait gate. The latter will be for the lost, those who walk down the broad way and enter into the wide gate (cf. 7:13-14).

Heaven and Hell

The teaching of Jesus about heaven and hell may be put under the same heading. Much of what can be said about the one is the exact opposite of what can be said about the other.

Are heaven and hell real places? Most people believe in a life after death where they will experience something analogous to what the Bible describes as heaven; however, fewer believe in the existence of hell and even fewer actually believe they will be consigned to such a place. The Bible and Jesus in particular teach that heaven and hell are real places. This does not mean that heaven is a physical place where angels and others are passing the time playing harps while lounging on the clouds nor does it mean that hell is a physical place where the devil is someone with a red suit, horns, a long tail, a pitchfork and has demons to carry out his bidding.

Such pictures of the hereafter mock the biblical concept of heaven and hell. Heaven is the spiritual dwelling place of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the redeemed of all the ages while hell is a place of eternal separation from God prepared for the devil and his angels. What Jesus says about these places makes these facts abundantly clear.

Are there degrees of reward in heaven and degrees of punishment in hell? The idea of degrees of reward and punishment is both reasonable and biblical. Although all in heaven will be happy beyond imagination, it seems only reasonable that the appreciation of some will be greater than that of others. Because of different levels of appreciation now, there is no reason to think there will not be varying levels in heaven.

For example, how could any of us possibly appreciate heaven in the same degree as servants like the beloved apostle Paul who made such great sacrifices for Jesus? Just as it is reasonable for people to be rewarded according to their deeds in this life, people will be rewarded accordingly in the next life. Not only is this reasonable, but Jesus makes it clear, as noted above, in His parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the parable of the pounds/minas (Luke 19:11-27).

If there are degrees of reward in heaven, similarly, will there be degrees of punishment in hell? Jesus' teaching on this matter seems

even more decisive concerning hell. Jesus preached in various places and even did mighty works in some of them. He was no stranger to the Galilean communities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. He told the former two communities that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them. He told Capernaum that it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for them (Matthew 10:15). "Tolerable" means "able to bear or endure." Judgment seems to be based on the opportunities each had enjoyed. All would receive punishment, but some would receive greater punishment.

Jesus gave further support for this when He said the servant who knew his master's will and did not obey shall be beaten with many stripes while that servant who did not know and disobeyed in ignorance will be beaten with few (Luke 12:47-48). Both are punished but each according to his culpability.

What is hell like? Insight into what hell is like can be seen in an examination of the word *Gehenna*, the word for hell. It is frequently pointed out that Jesus spoke of hell more often than any other New Testament writer. This claim is based on the number of times Jesus used the word. The word occurs 12 times in the New Testament, and 11 times it is used by Jesus. The other occurrence is found in James 3:6. The word originally referred to the valley of the sons of Hinnom, a ravine south of Jerusalem. In the Hebrew Bible, the site was initially where Israel, in rebellion to God, offered human sacrifice. Here King Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their sons to the pagan god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). It was a place of death.

By the time of Jesus, the valley was a literal garbage dump but one that far surpassed any in the modern mind. Dead bodies of animals, criminals and all kinds of filth were thrown into it. It was a place of corruption and dreadfulness beyond imagination. Fires continually burned to deal with the odor and purify the air. The fire, smoke and worms from the corruption made it a horrendous place in the eyes of Jews. Such a place is used by our Lord to refer to the destiny of the wicked: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Scripture clearly teaches that hell is a real place of torment for the wicked dead: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). It is a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (8:12). Hell is a place of unquenchable fire (v.

12), a furnace of fire (13:42) and an everlasting fire (25:41).

What is heaven like? It goes without saying that Jesus is much more descriptive about the place of the wicked dead than He is about the place of the righteous dead; however, He does give us some insights. Heaven is His Father's house, which contains many rooms. It is a place prepared by Jesus Himself in order that where He is the righteous can be as well (John 14:2-3). At the judgment, He will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). It is a place where the righteous will live forever.

As the wicked go into everlasting punishment, the righteous go into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). Heaven is a place where the Father is. In the model prayer Jesus said, "Our Father in heaven" (6:9). This sums up what heaven is really like. It is a place where God is—the creator of all things good and wholesome. And it sums up what hell is like; namely, a place where God is not. Those who will be in hell for eternity will be confined to a place where God is not. To be in a place for eternity without the grace, love and presence of God Himself is hell.

Are heaven and hell literal? Although they are real places, I do not think that Jesus would have us to understand that they are places with literal fire, darkness, smoke, etc., any more than He would have us to understand literally that heaven is a place with streets of gold, walls of jade and gates of pearl. It seems best to conclude that Jesus is attempting to describe something to us that is really indescribable.

How does one describe in human terms such a dreadful place as hell? Surely, outer darkness, gnashing of teeth, torment, unquenchable fire, etc., would be a way to describe something more horrible than we could imagine. Similarly, the description of heaven is in terms that we can relate to and can help us understand the wonderful place Jesus has prepared for the righteous dead.

Jesus had much to say about heaven, hell and judgment. May God help us to believe, understand and appreciate what Jesus has done for us in giving His life that on judgment day, we might avoid hell and enjoy heaven for all eternity, a prepared place for a prepared people.

TRUTH HAS NO VOICE OF ITS OWN

Byron Nichols

There is great value in truth. Surely truth is one of the greatest commodities in the world. Truth is so very important that Jesus identified Himself as the personification of it. The Lord said in John 14:6, "*I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" Solomon's wisdom led him to recognize the value of truth. He admonished, "*Buy the truth, and sell it not....*" (Proverbs 23:23). In spite of its remarkable value, truth becomes of no effect if it is not made known. Truth cannot speak for itself, it cannot speak in its own behalf, it cannot tell what it wants said, it cannot make itself known—it is dependent upon us to do these things for it.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Notice that Jesus here said that freedom results from truth. Freedom is exceedingly important to every person in the whole world; thus truth is of the greatest importance.

The church has been charged with the responsibility of revealing the truth to others. Jesus commissioned us to preach the Gospel (the Truth) to the whole creation, making disciples and baptizing people in all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Jesus implored the Father in behalf of His disciples, "*Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). If people are to be sanctified by the truth, God's Word, they must become aware of the truth. The truth must be given a voice, and Christians are that voice.

In Ephesians 1:13 Paul calls that word of truth "*the gospel of your salvation.*" Without having heard the word of truth those Ephesian Christians would not have had an opportunity for salvation. Christians are Christians because they have learned and obeyed the truth. Those who are not Christians are not Christians because they either have not had the truth made known to them, or they have rejected the truth.

David declared that he had not selfishly hidden God's truth, but he had made that truth known (Psalm 40:7-10). Can we, as God's children today, do anything less than that? Dare we allow God's truth to lie silently hidden in our church buildings, or even in our hearts, while the world plunges headlong into eternity without a saving knowledge of that truth? **We must** become truth's voice.

There is a growing number of people who believe that there is no such thing as truth that is absolute and unchanging. It is bewildering to think that such could possibly be the case, but there are even folks within the church who have yielded to this erroneous thinking. It is astounding to think that anyone who says he believes in God and believes the Bible could also believe that truth changes, that we really cannot **know** anything. The reason that this is so astounding is the fact that the Bible uses the word "know" and its related word forms literally hundreds of times. If truth is not absolute, if we cannot really know anything, surely we must totally reject the Bible, because it continually affirms that we can know many things, and that truth is absolute and unchanging.

Christians must stand for truth. We must be the voice of truth. We must be willing to live up to our commitment to stand with Jesus. Remember, He said that we are either **for** Him or **against** Him (Matthew 12:30). Someone has said, "He who stands for nothing will fall for anything." Surely that statement has some validity. It is our responsibility to stand with and for Jesus and truth.

While it is true that every Christian is required to stand for and speak up for truth, this is especially so in the case of those who serve as elders in the church. God's people are facing greater struggles today than ever before in the entire lifetime of nearly all in the church. Please understand very clearly—the situation is not hopeless. However, the welfare of the church depends largely upon those who are the elders, bishops, pastors, overseers. God's inspired Word has charged each of these men with the responsibility of *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9). Elders, please lead us by your example in standing for truth and against error. Please lead us in being the voice of truth. Please also lead us in doing these things *"in love"* (Ephesians 4:15).

As great as truth is, it cannot speak for itself. Truth can save, *but only if it is proclaimed by people*. As God's children, we possess tremendous power—we possess the truth of God. However, we can diminish the power of the truth by not sharing it and declaring it. What a tragedy it will be if we do not become the voice of truth so that souls for whom Christ died can be saved!

FELLOWSHIP

Jimmy Jividen

"IN CHRIST" fellowship should exist among all who follow His teachings. This includes all those from different ethnic backgrounds, different social and economic circumstances, different stages of Christian maturity, different genders, different personalities and different ages. Paul affirms this truth in Galatians 3:26-28. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

Scripture condemns divisions, parties, segregation, prejudices and isolation. Jews and Gentiles should be one in Christ. Bondmen and free men are in the same spiritual family. The uneducated and the educated are united by one purpose and goal. The rich and the poor are on the same level under the shadow of the cross. The strong and the weak are bound together in love. All are sons and daughters of the same heavenly Father, saved by the same Savior—Jesus Christ, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit and bonded together in the same body of Christ, the church.

Fellowship problems were in the apostolic church. These problems were confronted, condemned and corrected by apostles, evangelists and elders. There is a record in the New Testament of how they dealt with these problems. That record should be the guide for dealing with similar fellowship problems today.

Then as now, fellowship was being extended to those who had apostatized, who were immoral, who were teaching false doctrine, who were causing divisions, and who had left the fellowship.

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that "from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert" (Acts 20:30-31). This warning is needed today. In every generation false teachers will lead disciples away from the Lord. When fellowship with Christ is broken, it is necessary for Christ's church to break fellowship with them.

Those in the church at Corinth who practiced immorality were to be removed from the fellowship. Christians were not to associate with them. They were to be "removed from your midst." They were to be delivered to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The purpose for such action was threefold. First, it was in order that "his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). Second, it was to keep immorality from spreading to others in the church (vv. 6-8). Third, it was to maintain the holiness of the church (vv. 9-13). The church should not extend fellowship to immoral persons.

Diotrephes was a church divider. John described him as being "one who loves to be first" (3 John 9-11). In every generation men like Diotrephes want to be dictators and cause the church to be divided. Some in the church lead an undisciplined life contrary to the apostolic traditions and cause division (2 Thessalonians 3:6-7).

Some seek to cause factions even after they have been warned. They are to be rejected if they continue after the second warning (Titus 3:10). Paul instructed the church at Rome to keep a watchful eye on those "who cause dissension and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned" (Romans 16:17). Those who would divide the church should be rejected from the fellowship.

One of the most soul-damning, heartbreaking and divisive things that can happen in the church is to allow false teachers to teach in the classroom, to fill the pulpit, or to sit among the elders. Paul told about a division led by elders that would come into the church at Ephesus. John told of false teachers who traveled from place to place under the guise of being religious leaders but who did not abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). They were not to be given support or even hospitality; to do so would be to sanction their teaching and join in their sin.

Paul warned the Galatian Christians about teachers who preached a distorted message that was contrary to the gospel they had received. They were twice accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). The shame of many church leaders in our time is that they have allowed, sanctioned or tolerated false teachers in their midst to deceive the congregation whom they have the responsibility to lead. The result is either heartbreaking division or total apostasy.

Fellowship is broken when one leaves the church. It needs to be recognized. John spoke of this situation. "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19). The church did not withdraw fellowship from them; they withdrew their fellowship from the church. During the process of someone leaving the church, Christians have the responsibility of exhorting them, correcting them

and trying to restore them. When they leave anyway, they no longer are a part of the fellowship, and it should be recognized.

There are those who would compromise fellowship in the church to be broad enough to include the immoral, the divisive, the false teachers and those who have separated themselves from the church. They want union without unity. They want fellowship with those who are not in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Fellowship cannot be restored until that which caused the break in the fellowship has been corrected. Two cannot walk together unless they agree.

The Master Teacher

Tom Kelton

JESUS' CHIEF BUSINESS was teaching. Of all the ways that the Son of God could have chosen to unleash the Gospel message, He elected to be a teacher. It is true that He was an evangelist. And Christ was known as a healer and a worker of miracles. Certainly He was a remarkable preacher. But a look at the biblical evidence reveals that the most far-reaching impact of Jesus' life and work came through His teaching.

The Scriptural account of Jesus' life and ministry records numerous "teaching moments" — publicly in the synagogue, in the temple, and in the open air. In fact, Jesus is called "Teacher" more than any other title — forty-two times in the Gospel accounts. Another forty-seven times He is spoken of as "teaching." Christ apparently regarded Himself as a teacher. He never objected to being called by that name, though there were other designations that He forbade both His followers and detractors to use. Everywhere He went, Jesus responded to the cry "Master!"

Even those who disagreed with Him recognized Christ's identity as a master teacher and rabbi. Those Pharisees and Sadducees who opposed Jesus still called Him "the teacher."

Perhaps the most powerful evidence for Jesus as teacher is the disciples that accompanied Him. The disciples — literally "learners" — were a group of interested persons who saw in Jesus not only a speaker of memorable ability, but also a model of righteous living. As a teacher, Jesus Christ opened up to these people not only His words, but His entire life. The success or failure of the teacher was measured by what His pupils went on to accomplish. Certainly the

result from Christ's teaching of the disciples makes Him the greatest teacher of all time.

Succeeding generations, both of believers and non-believers, have concurred. Historian Fredrick Mayer asserts that "the impact of Jesus upon educational history is enormous. His stamp can never be erased." **Encyclopedia Judaica** agrees: "Even many persons who are not Christians believe that He was a great and wise teacher. He has probably influenced humanity more than anyone else who ever lived."

For the challenge of Christian education today, there is no better model than Christ.

Form IV
(See Rule 3)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Place of publication | Church of Christ
Near Market No.4
C.R. Park, New Delhi-110019 |
| 2. Periodicity of its publication | Monthly |
| 3. Printer's name | Sunny David
Church of Christ
C.R. Park
New Delhi-110019 |
| 4. Publisher's name | Sunny David
Church of Christ
C.R. Park
New Delhi-110019 |
| 5. Editor's name | Sunny David
Church of Christ
C.R. Park
New Delhi-110019 |
| 6. Name and address of
Individuals who owns
The newspaper | Church of Christ
Near Market No. 4
C.R. Park, New Delhi-110019 |

I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: March 2019

Sunny David