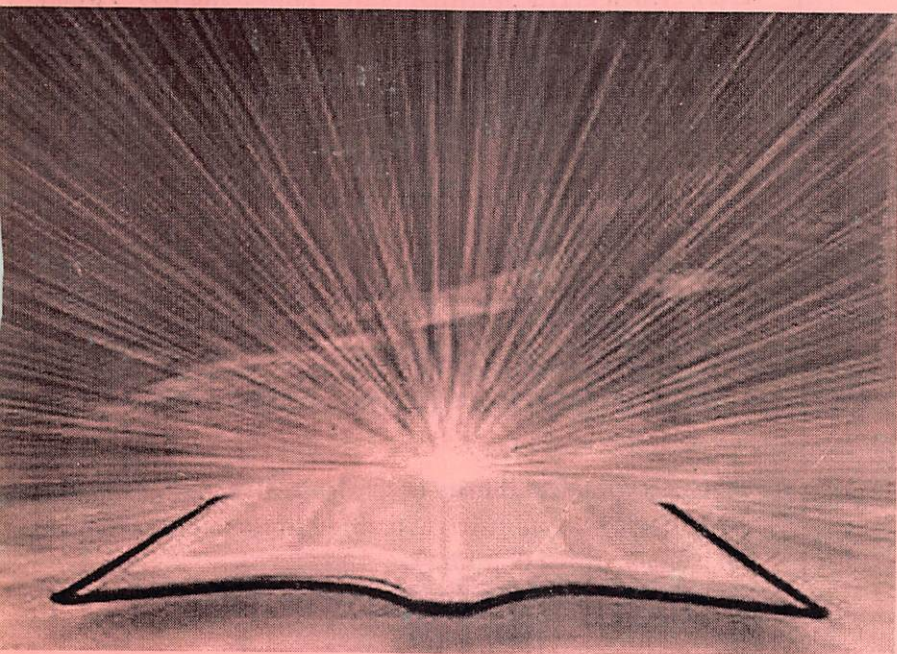


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

It Matters What The Bible Teaches

ALMOST NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO when the apostle Paul had entered Athens, a city in Greece, preaching the gospel of God, many who heard him exclaimed, "You are bringing some strange things to our ears" (Acts 17:20). The apostle had told them about the one true God, the Creator of heavens and earth and all that is in them, including man himself. The people of Athens were very religiously inclined. They were worshipper of God. But they were worshipping God whom they did not know. They were nice and religious people, but they were ignorant of the One True God. Hence Paul told them, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." (Acts 17:23). They were sincerely worshipping God, whom they didn't know; they didn't know His will. They didn't know how to worship God acceptably, as He has revealed. Their worship was based on their own imaginations; they were following traditions they had learned from their parents or others. So Paul told them they were worshipping God ignorantly. Hearing Paul preach the truth, they exclaimed, "You are bringing some strange things to our ears." (Acts 17:20)

Millions of people have the same attitude today for the truth of the gospel. Today many religious people, who believe Bible to be the word of God, and Christ is the Savior and the Son of God, find it very strange when it is called to their attention that according to



the teaching of the Bible, one is not saved by merely only believing in Christ, or by accepting Christ as their personal savior, or by praying for salvation. Many preachers throughout the world for many years have been preaching this false doctrine of salvation by "faith only", or "salvation by prayer"; and millions of people have been deceived believing and following this false teaching, as they think they are saved because they mentally believe in Christ, or have prayed and asked Jesus to come into their hearts to save them. They are deceived because they are ignorant of what the Bible teaches one must do to be saved from sins. Many of them are honest, religious, sincere, God fearing and Bible believing people. But they have never checked, or read from the Bible itself correctly; what the Bible teaches about who will be saved. They have simply heard what preachers or "Pastors" told them, and they believed and followed it. They are living in deception just as those about whom we read in Matthew 7:22,23.

And, yet, Christ taught, "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). The word of Christ or God will judge us all on the last day. Not what a preacher or a "Pastor" said! Our souls are at stake, when it comes to salvation of our souls. Listen to what the author of salvation, Jesus Christ, has said about who will be saved, He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). Some think, he who does not believe will be condemned. This is true. But the question is not who will be condemned, but who will be saved? **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."** This is what the Bible teaches. Not the one who believes only. If one believes only, the Bible says, "Even the demons believe and tremble." And, "faith without works is dead." (James 2:19, 20). The phrase "faith only" is found only once in the Scripture, where it says: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24). In Jerusalem when the gospel was preached to a great multitude of people; after believing the gospel message of Christ, when people had asked the apostles, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" They were told to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). If they had to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved; why should this not be required even today for salvation? Does it sound strange to you? Bible's plan of salvation is not changed. It still reads the same as it did almost two

thousand years ago. Men have changed God's plan for salvation of man, as they have changed many other teachings of the Bible. Yet, Christ warned, "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

THE GREAT JUDGEMENT DAY

J.C. Choate



There is a great day coming; a day like no man has ever seen before; a day of reckoning. This day will involve both the divine and human elements. God will be on the one hand while man will be on the other; one will be the judge and the other will be the judged. On this day of all days the judgement will take place. The Bible speaks of this event time and time again; man has been warned to prepare for it and only that day will reveal the results.

Now please observe a few facts in relation to the judgment which is to come:

1. There will be a judgment. The apostle Paul says: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10). Some may doubt that there will be a judgment, and there are those who publicly and intentionally denounce such a truth, but all such people will be brought down to their knees one day. The apostle says: "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom. 14:11). Yes, there will be a judgment whether you believe it or not.

2. All will be there. The Hebrew writer Proclaims, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27). Since the Judgment will take place after death, and death has been pronounced upon every man, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all will appear on the day of judgment. All will be there on that great day: The great and small, the rich and poor, the educated and uneducated, the healthy and sick, the saved and unsaved. Yes, all the world who have lived, who are living now, and who will live, shall be there. Not one soul will be allowed to escape.

3. Each will be judged according to his works. We read: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to

that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10). All works will be open before the Lord; he'll know the hearts of all; not one thing will be allowed to pass by unnoticed. Righteous works will be accepted, but evil works will be condemned.

4. Christ will be the judge. The record reads: "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; where of he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:31). So Christ will be the judge, the righteous judge. We shall have nothing to fear inasmuch as the Lord will not be a respecter of persons, but will judge us according to our works. Man might not be as fair.

5. The judgement will be final. Christ, in picturing it said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt.25:46). When the judgment comes, it will be too late to prepare. Moreover, after man has been sentenced it will be permanent: Both those who are saved and those who are lost will live in eternity according to God's decree.

6. All will be rewarded. Peter states, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17,18). Those who obey the Lord will be blessed with a crown of life but those who refuse to obey him will be cast into the lake of fire. There are only two classes—no place in between.

The judgment is sure and eternity is certain. With this in mind, what will you do about it? Friend, life is too short, heaven is too wonderful, and hell is too hot for you to take a chance. Obey God now.

Reading the Law of God

Loy Mitchell

MOSES IS ABOUT TO DIE. Joshua will become the new leader and bring the people into the promised land. What did Moses desire for the people of God? He wrote down this law of God and gave it to the priests and to all the elders of Israel. He then gave the following instructions concerning this law. Read Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

IT WAS TO BE READ AT A RELIGIOUS FEAST (V.10,11)

"At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts,

during the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose, YOU SHALL READ THIS LAW BEFORE THEM IN THEIR HEARING'(vs. 10,11). What better time could be found to read the message of God? Weekly we meet around the Lord's table; is that not a good time to listen to His word?

IT WAS TO BE READ PUBLICLY (V. 11)

It is right to read the word of God in private, but many fail to do this. The reading of the law was for instruction. Verse twelve tells us it was so they could LEARN to *"fear the Lord your God."* The public reading of the Scriptures is an important means of building up the saints of God. Many have Bibles, but so few take the time daily to read them.

IT WAS TO BE READ FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE YOUNG AND THE OLD (V. 12,13)

"Assemble the people — men, women, and children, and the aliens living in your towns— so they can LISTEN and LEARN TO FEAR the Lord your God and FOLLOW CAREFULLY ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess"(vs. 12,13). We err today when we fail to address the young with God's word. The Bible has a message for those who are old, but this book also speaks to those who are young. We suffer today because the reading of this holy book is done by so few.

IT WAS TO BE READ SO THAT MEN AND WOMEN WOULD BE ABLE TO OBEY IT

"Follow carefully all the words of this law. Don't leave out any part. Man does not live by bread alone, but by EVERY word that comes from God." Bread does no good to satisfy hunger unless it is eaten. God's word avails nothing when it is unread and thus not obeyed.

Let us resolve today that we will read and obey His word.

Can We Agree In Religion?

Gynnath Ford

THERE IS A VERY popular idea that religious people cannot agree. This idea is untrue in the light of present practice and Bible teaching.

There are certain things in God's Word and present-day practice that lead me to believe you and I can agree in religion.

In the days that the New Testament was being written, there was harmony and agreement among God's people. The Bible clearly teaches this. It was the plan of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit that it should be this way.

Prayer Of Christ

Among the last words spoken by Christ before he went to Calvary were these:

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are... . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:11-21).

When we examine these words we find that there were two groups of people for whom Christ prayed. First, he prayed for his chosen apostles, that they may be one as he and the Father were one. Secondly, he prayed for them also which shall believe on him through the word of the apostles that they may be one as he and the Father were one. He prayed for his apostles; he prayed for you and me. We are the ones who believe on him through the word of the apostles. Certainly we agree on this. If not, how did you believe on the Lord? Certainly it was through the words written in the Bible. He prayed that we may be one! His purpose was the highest that could be had. We read, "...that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). A oneness of Christ's followers leads the world to believe that God sent his Son to die for sinful man. Many are the heathen who failed to believe because someone came from one church and preached one thing; another came from another church and preached something contrary and different to the first. How can God be the author of such confusion? He is not! It is a reflection upon man and not upon God. The message is pure, the messenger is faulty. Will we believe that Christ prayed for something that is impossible? Never! We really can be one, we can agree.

How Are We To Be One?

Christ said that we are to be one as he and the Father are one. Hence the question arises, how are he and the Father one? Christ and the Father are one in will and word. Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Christ was perfect. He never sinned, hence

he never lied. He really did the will of the Father. He and the Father were one in will! This is clearly shown when Jesus said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). We can be assured that when Jesus spoke we heard the word of the Father. They were one in word! Christ's words were the Father's words. We understand then how we are to be one. We are to be one in the will and words of the Father and the Son.

The Apostles Were One

Christ prayed that they may be one as he and the Father were one. (John 17:11.) He gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into that oneness.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

They had a guide that was perfect. He would bring to their remembrance everything Jesus had spoken unto them. He would teach them all things.

When they began to speak they spoke the words of Christ as they were guided by the Holy Ghost. Peter, Paul, James, and John all preached the same gospel. They were all guided by the same Holy Spirit. *Read* as Paul speaks of unity and oneness. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all ..." (Ephesians 4:4-6).

This is the oneness that prevailed at the time of the Apostle Paul. The body is the church and there was one at that time. In that same letter we read:

"... And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

We learn that God gave Christ to be the head of the church, which is his body.

"And he is the head of the body, the church ..." (Colossians 1:18).

The Bible teaches that the body is the church. There is one body, hence there is one church. Paul also says:

“For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church” (I Corinthians 4:17).

In the days of Paul the same thing was taught in every church and there was but one. This is what Christ prayed for.

Can We Agree Today?

We can. There are many reasons why we say this.

1. Christ prayed that we may be one in will and word (John 17:20-21). Christ never prayed for an impossibility.
2. Paul cast a curse upon those who preached another gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). If it is impossible to preach the same gospel, then God is condemning us for doing something we cannot help doing.
3. Paul called upon the Corinthians to speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among them (I Corinthians 1:10). He would not have asked them to do the impossible.
4. There was one church and one gospel in Paul's day (Ephesians 4:4-6). If we were guided by the same Holy Spirit, there would be one today. Is this not reasonable?
5. Human experience and preaching today show that we can agree through the Word of God.

How can we be agreed when there are so many churches teaching so many different things? Let us notice something about the preaching in most churches. We are speaking to those who believe that the Bible, all of it, is God's Word.

1. Most of the preachers and churches agree on the facts of the gospel.
2. Most of the preachers and churches agree on the promises of the gospel.
3. The primary source of division is in reference to the commands of the gospel. If we can agree on the facts and promises of the gospel, why not the commands?

Facts Of The Gospel

“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. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how 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: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (I Corinthians 15:1-8).

The people with whom I have been associated agree that the facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the proper witnesses testifying to the same.

When the Apostle Paul was facing people who did not believe in the resurrection from the dead, what was his attitude? In that same letter Paul said, "... yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Corinthians 9:16). In Athens he said, "... he (God) hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Their reaction to this preaching was, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked ..." (Acts 17:32). This did not keep Paul from preaching the gospel. Those who believe the Bible today will not refrain from preaching the gospel because others mock and persecute them. We must not "shun to declare all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Promises Of The Gospel

"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" (John 3:16).

Among those who believe the Bible it is generally agreed that Christ promises everlasting life.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ..." (Acts 3:19).

It is likewise agreed that the Lord promises to blot out your sins.

"And we are his witnesses of these things: and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God had given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

It is agreed that Christ promises the Holy Ghost to all them that obey him. We understand that this is not the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the miraculous outpouring that the apostles received. If so, we could do the things that this Holy Ghost baptism enabled them to do. It guided them into all truth (John 16:13). It does not give us that miraculous power to know all truth today; but we depend upon

the Spirit's sword, the Word of God, for our truth (Ephesians 6:17). If men were baptized with the Holy Ghost as were the apostles, they would need no Bible. They could write one. That is what those inspired men did. We agree upon the promises of the gospel.

Commands Of The Gospel

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

Religious people in general are agreed that faith is a command of the gospel. It must also be a faith that is coupled with repentance.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

There are very few religious people that I have met who believe that man is saved before he repents. They may say he repents before he believes, but it is a rare case that says he is saved before he repents. Repentance is a command of the gospel. It is essential to salvation. My friend, we have agreed thus far; at least, those who believe the Bible are agreed on these points.

Why Have We Agreed?

Is it not because we can understand the facts and the promises of the gospel? We understand that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and arose from the dead, according to reliable witnesses. We understand that he promises us remission of sins, the Holy Ghost, and everlasting life. Who says we cannot understand the Bible? We do on these points. God is just. He asks us to obey him and receive salvation (Matthew 7:21, Hebrews 5:8). He would not make his will impossible to understand. That would make him responsible for our damnation. Who will believe it? Certainly it is not God's fault if we be lost. The reason why we preach the same facts and promises of the gospel is because we preach just what the Bible says, no more and no less. How do we know or how can we preach that Christ was buried? The Bible tells us this hundreds of times. How can we know our buried body will arise? The Bible tells us this many times.

We can preach the same commands also by following the same plan. We preach the same facts because we preach what the Bible says. We preach the same promises because we preach what the Bible says. We can preach the same commands if we preach what the Bible says.

What Most Churches Preach

Most churches preach that faith and repentance are essential

to salvation. What would happen if the pulpits of our land would ring with all the commands of the gospel? For example, what a revolution it would cause if preachers would stand and quote these scriptures without addition, subtraction, or substitution?

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ..." (Acts 2:38). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Would not the reaction be the same as that of the eunuch in Acts 8:36 who said, "... see, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Why is it that the pulpits are as silent as the tomb on this subject? Why do the large revival campaigns leave these great scriptures out of their preaching? Did Peter and Paul and Philip fail to speak on this great command of the Bible? Who is shunning to declare the whole counsel of God?

We Can Agree

You can see how easy it would be to speak the same thing. It can be done only by telling the people what Jesus, Peter, and Paul told the people in new testament days. What if one failed to tell that Christ arose from the dead? That would be a failure to preach the whole gospel. The same is true when one fails to tell people that baptism is essential to man's salvation. What would happen if all the facts, commands, and promises of the gospel were preached by all men? We would be one as Christ and the Father were one, one in will and word. What would this lead to? It would lead to the salvation of souls. This is the only thing that preaching the whole gospel can lead to. It would lead to a destruction of denominationalism and division. We can agree if we tell people what the Bible says. We can agree on what the Bible calls followers of God. "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). We can never agree upon the names, Methodist, Baptist, or Adventist. We can agree on the Bible name in the same manner as we agree on the facts of the gospel. The Bible gives us those. We now agree that Christ was buried. The Bible tells us so. We now agree that the buried body will arise. The Bible tells us so. We can in like manner agree that we are to be buried with the Lord in baptism. Why? The Bible tells us so. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ..." (Romans 6:4). This is the way

in which religious people can all speak the same thing. In new testament times when men obeyed the gospel, the Lord added them to his church (Acts 2:47). If we did the same things today, we would be added to the same church. Then we could say as Paul said, "There is one body ..." (Ephesians 4:4). May that be your desire.

True Worship

Jimmy Jividen

WORSHIPPING GOD IS MORE than saying the right word at the right time and place. Jesus corrected such a misconception with the woman of Samaria.

"...Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father....God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:21,24).

Worshipping God is more than giving a pleasing performance to show your devotion. Jesus corrected such a perverted view of worship in the Sermon on the Mount.

"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5).

Worshipping God is more than stirring the emotions. Emotional feelings can be caused by human phenomena and false religions. Such emotions can confuse the mind and overpower the will. Paul described it thus:

*"You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols; however, you were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2).
"...we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Ephesians 4:14).*

True worship is my spirit seeking communion with God's spirit in praise and thanksgiving. Our wills, as well as our words, become living sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God. These — our will and our words — are the only things we really own. True worship is giving ourselves to God.

BLIND FAITH ?

David Stewart

Is New Testament Christianity *blind* faith? By using the adjective "blind" some people would likely assume that there is no foundation or basis for Christianity. They would think that in order for a person to be a Christian he would have to be naive or superstitious. Yet I propose that *not* being a Christian is actually the blind stance. One must ignore or brush away all the evidence that has been preserved and laid before us.

What evidence is there for Jesus and the religion that He established?

HISTORICITY

The evidence testifies that Jesus was indeed a historical person. Jesus is no cartoon character like Superman or a fictitious hopeful like the Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy, or Santa Claus. He was born into this world at a specific time (during the reign of Caesar Augustus, Luke 2:1) and in a specific place (Bethlehem of Judea, Luke 2:4).

Eyewitnesses surrounded Jesus and some left records of His life. The 27 documents of the New Testament bear witness of Him. The apostle John wrote from his close association with Jesus: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked at** and our hands have **touched** — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life*" (1 John 1:1). Even historians outside the New Testament (such as Tacitus, Seutonius, and Josephus) wrote about Jesus and the Christian movement, confirming their historicity.

PROPHECY

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies that spoke of Him several centuries beforehand! In the New Testament we repeatedly read quotations from the Old Testament in which Jesus is the fulfillment of what God had promised long ago. A few prominent examples will illustrate the testimony of prophecy.

1) Jesus would have a Spirit-empowered ministry. "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" (Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:18,19).

2) Jesus would sacrificially die. "*He was led like a sheep to the*

slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7,8; Acts 8:32,33).

3) Jesus would be raised from the dead. *"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay"* (Psalm 16:9,10; Acts 2:26,27). These things were fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire as it was spoken: *"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed"* (Daniel 2:44). God accomplished this through Jesus by establishing His church (Matthew 16:18,19).

CHARACTER

Jesus lived the only perfect life that has been lived on the face of the earth. Even those with hypocrisy in their hearts recognized that Jesus was different from the normal man: *"Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are"* (Mark 12:14). Jesus refused all the temptations to take shortcuts in establishing His kingdom (Matthew 4:8,9; John 6:15; 18:10). He did not bow to the carnal messianic expectations of the Jewish nation. Rather He came to serve, even stooping to the task of a slave by washing His disciples' feet (Matthew 20:28; John 13:1-17).

Unlike other religious teachers who have come and gone, Jesus never fell for the lures of the Evil One. Jesus *"knew no sin"* (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22). Through suffering and obedience He was *"made perfect"* (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus was *"holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners"* (Hebrews 7:26). Jesus went the distance, having *"been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).

TEACHING

Jesus' teaching transcends that of all the philosophers and sages of the past, present, and future. He taught God's truth as one who had come from the Father (John 7:16,17). He emphasized not only performing the right action, but having the right kind of heart (Matthew 5:7).

Jesus presented Himself and His way of living as the *only possible means of salvation* (John 14:6). He left His words to sound forth as the standard of judgment in the final day (John 12:48).

His teaching shocked people: *"The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law"* (Matthew 7:28,29).

MIRACLES

Jesus demonstrated that He was no ordinary individual. He

performed many miracles, which are recorded by the Gospel writers. The apostle John calls these miracles "signs" because they point to the greater reality of who Jesus is.

John did not record very many of Jesus' miracles, but enough to produce faith in the hearts of his readers (John 20:30,31). Jesus himself appealed to the miracles as a basis for faith (John 14:11) and they were also used as proof in early gospel preaching, that Jesus was the Messiah: "*Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know*" (Acts 2:22). Jesus' miracles were common knowledge among the masses.

RESURRECTION

Jesus ultimately overcame death, being raised never to die again! The stone was rolled back, no body was found in the tomb, and the grave clothes had been left lying there (John 20:1-9).

The apostle Paul wrote concerning Jesus' resurrection appearances: "*He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also*" (1 Corinthians 15:5-8; cf. Acts 2:32). Jesus is "*the resurrection and the life*" (John 11:25).

What will you do with the evidence for Jesus?

Water Too Precious To Drink

Jack Harriman

DAVID WAS ON THE run from King Saul. He was hiding in a cave near Bethlehem. This is where he grew up. Memories of his youth come flooding back. "*And David said with longing. 'Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate'*" (2 Samuel 23:15).

Over in Bethlehem is a garrison of the Philistines who had invaded the land. With David is a small troop of loyal and daredevil warriors. Three of David's warriors fought their way to that well, drew water and fought their way back, and presented David with water from the well by the gate for which he longed.

But David would not drink it. He poured it out as an offering unto the Lord saying, "*Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?*" (verse 17). This would seem to indicate David had no intention of

sending these men on this perilous mission, and was not aware of their going.

While we really admire the love and devotion of these warriors to David, it is David's act that gets our attention. I believe David was longing more for his childhood than for a drink of water. O, for those wonderful carefree days of childhood when it seemed everyone loved one another and life was simple and secure. We can all identify with that longing.

Thank God for the memories of childhood, but God did not create us to be children. And even if David could have gone back, he would not have been satisfied. That water was not as good as he remembered and no one loved him in childhood as these three men demonstrated they did.

Do you have something that is too precious to use on yourself? Then give it to the Lord!

“THINK ON HIS NAME”

Clarence DeLoach

THE BOOK OF MALACHI brings to a close Old Testament revelation. In many ways it is a dismal picture of God's covenant people. The people, as a whole, had wearied God!

The priests (leaders) had despised His name (1:6).

They offered polluted bread upon the altar (1:7).

They offered the blind, lame, and sick as sacrifices (1:8).

They robbed God by withholding their tithes and offerings (3:8-10).

God said, “You have wearied me” (Malachi 2:17). God can be wearied by the apathy, indifference, and abstinence of His people. He still is!

But, there are some bright spots. There was a remnant! The prophet said, *“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another — and the Lord hearkened and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name”* (Malachi 3:16).

From this verse we gain numerous insights:

- In tough times the righteous need each other.
- In dark days those of like precious faith need to **often** speak to one another.
- The Lord hearkens and knows those who fear Him.

- He owns them, spares them, and considers them His jewels (3:17).

Now, what relevance does this message from ancient Malachi have for God's people — Christians — now? Just this: we live in tough times! Pressures abound! God put us in a family! The church is that family! We need to stick together!

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Byron Nichols

WHEN JESUS, IN MATTHEW 5:3, says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit...*," of whom is He speaking? What are characteristics of such a person?

I am told that the Greek word used here and translated "poor" is a word that describes utter and absolute poverty. It doesn't describe the man who does not have luxury; it describes the man who has nothing at all. Jesus then is saying, "Blessed is he who is completely poverty-stricken."

The Lord actually spoke the beatitudes in Aramaic rather than Greek. The word He spoke here that we read as "poor" was to the Jews a description of a man who had absolutely no earthly resources and who thus placed his entire trust in God.

I assume that we all understand that Jesus intended a spiritual application of His words, not a literal physical application. As we put the Greek and the Aramaic backgrounds together we see that Jesus is talking about the man who completely trusts in God because he realizes that he himself is totally helpless and that God can help him to become something meaningful.

Let me say here that I don't believe that this just "happened" to be the first of these beatitudes spoken by Jesus. At the very heart and core of being "poor in spirit" is humility. I believe that the Lord would have us to understand that possessing and displaying humility is absolutely essential before we can develop the other attributes that depict the life of one who is striving to please and honor Him.

There surely is some validity to the idea that humility is "the most beautiful flower in the Christian garden." We all admire and appreciate humility — in others. Demonstrating it in our own lives is another matter, however. The presence of humility requires the absence of ego, and that is difficult for most of us. It's not easy for us to really accept the wisdom of Jesus spoken in Matthew 23:12 — "*And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles*

himself will be exalted." As always, though, Jesus paved the way for us by setting a divine example of humility. In so doing, He also provided us with proof that humility really does bring about exaltation.

Let's read again the wonderful words of Philippians 2:5-11 — *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* If these words are true, and they are, then we should be ready and willing to "follow in His steps" by emptying and humbling ourselves. In so doing, we will also be exalted ultimately.

Seeing ourselves as we really are can make it much easier to humble ourselves, to be "poor in spirit." The story is told about an elderly Scotchwoman who came from the Highlands into the city of Edinburgh for the first time, and while there had her photograph taken. Gazing at the result, she handed it back and exclaimed, "My, but it's a humbling sight!" How true for us all! To be able to see ourselves as God sees us would undoubtedly rid us all of every shred of conceit and pride that stands to hinder our achieving the exaltation and honor that can only come from Him.

At least some of the thinkers of the past were successful in recognizing and advocating the tremendous importance of being "poor in spirit." Erasmus said, "It is vain to gather virtues without humility; for the spirit of God delights to dwell in the hearts of the humble." Augustine strongly advised the pursuit of humility as he said, "Should you ask me, 'What is the first thing in religion,?' I should reply, 'The first, second, and third thing therein is humility.'"

We all need to individually look closely at our attitudes toward ourselves and toward God. Do we really view ourselves as being totally helpless without God? Is it our spirit or attitude that we put God first, that we acknowledge our own lack of significance and brilliance, that we "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"?

May God grant us the spiritual fortitude and humility necessary to be "poor in spirit."

EARTH'S FATE

Owen D. Olbricht

NOT MANY YEARS AGO some in the unbelieving world were very skeptical of biblical statements that the elements of the universe would burn up with intense heat. They made fun of Scriptures which asserted that the earth and heavens would pass away and be dissolved. They asked, "How can our vast oceans, the dirt, and mountains of rocks be burned up?"

Even though scientists are not purposefully trying to show that recent discoveries substantiate Bible statements, such is the case. An article in the **Arkansas Democrat Gazette**, Thursday, December 18, 1997, page 3A, "*Dying-Star Photo Suggests Earth's Fate*," does just that.

The article began, "Photos of dying stars, glowing like Christmas tree ornaments against a black velvet sky, give a preview of what will ultimately happen to the sun and how Earth may be burnt to a crisp in about 6 billion years, astronomers say.

"The new images, taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, show the death throes of stars about the size of the earth's sun and illustrate, astronomers say, how the sun will one day exhaust its nuclear fuel, flare into a red giant and then collapse to a white dwarf that cools and perhaps even disappears."

The article also states, "One theory about the sun's future suggests that its final sphere of hot gas could expand outward enough to envelope Earth, draw it toward the center and completely vaporize the planet."

Under that scenario, Balick (astronomer at the University of Washington, Seattle) said, "We wouldn't go to hell — it would come to us."

Later Balick stated, concerning pictures taken by the Hubble telescope, "These pictures will change the textbooks."

These Hubble pictures help confirm previous predictions concerning the end of our universe made by astronomers Fred Adams and Greg Laughlin, as reported in **The Arkansas Democrat Gazette**, January 16, 1997, page 2LA: "The stars, the sun, the Earth...will evaporate into radiation. There will be no light, just a vast soup of subatomic particles."

These recent discoveries confirm what almost two thousand years ago the Bible had taught, which until recently was thought by many to be absurd and unscientific. The destruction of the universe

was accepted as a matter of *faith* by believers because *they could not explain how non-flammable matter could be burned up*. Their best explanation was that if God created it, He could destroy it.

Now it is evident that what the Bible stated *would* happen *can* happen, though not in the time-frame suggested by scientists, nor as the result of a "natural" process. The same Scriptures which tell us it *will happen* also tell us that God Himself will determine the time, and that the word of His power will herald the end.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" (2 Peter 3:10-12).

The fate of the Earth and the rest of the universe has already been scientifically described in the Bible.

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

John Thiesen

AFTER JESUS WAS RAISED from the grave, the apostle Peter said that God made Him *"both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). In many places in the Bible, Jesus is called "Lord."

The word "Lord" in the Scriptures means "master...the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner" (**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**). We still use the word in this sense today when we say that someone is the "landlord." We mean he owns the property. He can do with it as he pleases because it belongs to him.

CHRIST OWNS ALL THINGS

Jesus said of Himself, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"* (Matthew 28:18). Here on earth **all governments and civil powers are under His authority**. He can do with them as He pleases. When God raised Jesus, He *"set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come..."* (Ephesians 1:20,21). So, Jesus is not only over all rulers on earth, He is also above all

orders and ranks of angels and beings in the spirit world.

Christ is the rightful owner of **all things** because He made them in the first place. God did not make a single thing without Christ. John said that in the beginning Jesus was with God, was God, and that *"all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:1-3). As the maker of all things, He has the right to be Lord of them and to rule over them.

THINGS OF WHICH JESUS IS LORD

Jesus is Lord of **life**. In order to live again, we must come to Him. The heavenly Father has deposited in the Son all authority to give life. It will be Jesus who will on the last day raise us from the grave. He has also been made our judge, the one who will decide where each of us shall live in eternity. The Father personally will not be doing the judging, but has committed that authority to His Son.

The Father also made Jesus the Lord of **the church**. He purchased it with His own blood on the cross, and is therefore the owner of it. The church, made up of the saved, is His kingdom, over which He now reigns and will continue to reign eternally when He comes to take it home at the end of time.

Is Jesus your Lord, and does He reign in your life?

GOD – MY HELPER

Allan E. Flaxman

"I WILL LIFT UP mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1,2).

Do we sometimes forget that we live in a God-cursed world (Genesis 3:17)? Yet, the sinfulness of man, which led God to "curse the ground" for, remember, "man's sake," is presented to us daily through the media.

Wickedness is rampant! Newspapers, radio, television, hour by hour bring us reports of murders, kidnappings, robberies, rape, licentious behavior, sodomy, riots, wars, and threats of wars! The picture is far from pretty! Yet it is no exaggeration.

Are these reports calculated to improve our health, either physically, mentally, or spiritually? To ask the question is to answer it with a resounding "No!" To dwell on these reports must surely ruin our appetites and utterly destroy our happiness. Yet, to ignore them is to cover our eyes and block up our ears in a childish game of

make believe. And, the "thinker" does not practice his art for long before concluding that something is basically, radically, and terribly wrong.

In search of a solution, some yearn for a return of the "good old days." But is such a return possible? Even suppose it to be possible, is it really desirable? After all, were those "old days" really "so good?" Go back to the early years of this century and consider World War I for just a moment. Oh, we forget so quickly, don't we! Think of the carnage, butchery, and horrors of the trench warfare for which that war was noted, and it can only sicken us and fill us with loathing, disgust, and repugnance. Are these "good old days?" Would we return to these days?

Go back a little further. My country, Australia, as recently as 1788, got under way when a fleet of sailing ships brought to our shores a cargo of "convicts" and some stores and founded a British colony. Many of these convicts experienced inhumane floggings while lashed to a triangle, their backs often torn to ribbons with the "cat-o-nine tails," and were subject to other coldblooded brutality and abuses. These are things we would like to forget! Would we like to return to these "good old days?"

But go back still further in search of better times with less evil. The search is in vain. We come to Roman times and look upon the Christ Himself. Without any reservation whatsoever, He is declared to be innocent of *"any crime at all"* (see Matthew 27:19,23,24; John 18:38). Yet, in the face of this He is mocked, flogged, tortured, and then mercilessly crucified! And we find that, during the church's infancy, His followers were treated with similar shocking inhumanity, simply to provide, we are told, a Roman Holiday! We find this kind of public wickedness to have been commonplace in every generation and among all nations. Closing our eyes and blocking our ears make the facts no less real.

Where then shall we go?

The Psalmist has the answer. Not to the "hills," but to God Himself (Psalm 130:1,2). God loves you (John 3:16)! God cares (1 Peter 5:7)! *"Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). Faith in Christ and genuine repentance, coupled with one simple act of obedience, and God not only forgives our sins, but He forgets them forever! Read Hebrews 8:12; 9:11-14; 4:14-16 and Romans 6:3-5. These verses will do your heart good in this troubled world.

Yes, the Psalmist says, *"God is my helper."* God makes it possible

for us to live in this world of sin and maintain our sanity. But more than this, He provides for us the “key” to eternal life with Him.

Recognizing GOD's Signature

Michael L. King

MOST EVERYTHING THAT WE do or have in this life carries with it a name. Whether we are opening a bank account, borrowing money, making a major purchase, or getting married, a signature is required. This gives credibility or validity to an agreement or contract. Paperwork is often returned because it is lacking a necessary signature. It, too, shows proof or validity of ownership. A painting that is signed costs more money than one that is not, due to the personal touch.

God has a signature that is inscribed on His handiwork. Two names appear in the Bible; **Elohim** is usually translated **God** and means “strength” and often appears in the short form, **El**. This use is found in **El-Shaddai**, meaning God Almighty. The patriarchs of old knew God by this name (Genesis 28:3; Exodus 6:3). This term represents God to the world as Creator, ruler, and He who controls the operations of nature. **Jehovah** is used to represent God as He relates to His chosen people in a special way through dwelling with, guiding, extending grace, salvation, and covenant keeping (Psalm 9:10; 91:14).

“Signature” seems to indicate that something or someone is designated by making a mark. A name, as is the case with God's name, is a sign of ownership or one's workmanship. Skilled and talented people are particular about the quality of work upon which they allow their name to be placed. Signatures are sometimes forged to something without the consent of the one to whom the name belongs. Cattle owners often brand their herd to distinguish or mark them to prevent their being confused with other herds. God has placed a “signature” upon His workmanship to distinguish it from the work of an imposter. Obviously, we are not speaking of a literal handwritten signature placed upon something, although God's work can be detected and is discernable by virtue of contrast with the work of the devil or mere men.

When one becomes a follower of God and enters into a relationship wherein he is God's possession, God's child, he bears the distinctive name “Christian” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). He is permitted to do so by God's authority because he has been

born into the Family through obedience culminating in baptism (Matthew 28:19).

Actually, the entire godhead "signed" or allowed the distinction, "Christian", to be made. As a result of the act of baptism, God signed the "birth certificate" because a believer exercised an obedient faith, thus becoming His child (Galatians 3:26-29). As a child of God, there is an entitlement to those who are heirs. God has ordained that this be so, and with the stroke of His authoritative pen of inspiration, He made all who would be "*led by the Spirit of God*" and "*mortify (kill) the deeds of the body*" become recipients of His eternal possessions along with Christ (Romans 6:6-8; 8:14-17).

God signed a "promissory note" with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:17), which was renewed many times to Abraham's descendants, that "*through his seed, all nations of the earth shall be blessed*" (Galatians 3:6-9). This "*seed*" was Jesus the Savior (Acts 13:23; Galatians 3:16), and God's will was signed into force by the signaturing of Christ's "death warrant" on the cross of Calvary (John 3:16). Upon the death of Jesus, the "testator," all previous arrangements were made obsolete and the new covenant (will, or testament) was activated, making the above promises accessible (Hebrews 9:16,17). God was then free to signature the "ordination papers" enabling those who were obedient to His Word to receive eternal life, even the Gentiles (Acts 13:48)!

Those who are the children of God bear His signature, His mark of distinction, which makes them peculiar to all others because of their zeal for that which is good and right (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). This peculiarity is manifested by Christians and validates the fact that they bear God's holy name (signature, mark) upon their lives through the observance of the Spirit-inspired Word (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The fruit of that word in their lives is "*... love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance ... and they who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*" (Galatians 5:22-24). Too, those who would bear the stamp of God's "signed lifestyle" or bear His "divine nature" will be found "*giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 1:4-8).

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