

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

A Preacher Is Not Pastor

THE TERMS “PREACHER” and “Pastor” are mostly and generally regarded today as synonymous. But the Bible makes a distinction between them, so that not every preacher would be also a pastor. Scripturally speaking, a pastor may also be a preacher, but a preacher is not necessarily a pastor. This is a misuse of the terms by denominational churches. The present day “Pastor system” with preachers or evangelists being “in charge” of a church was unknown to Christians in the first century. Preachers were not called pastors unless they possessed certain qualifications and had been appointed in a congregation to work as pastors or overseers, and note if you will, when pastors or elders were appointed in a particular congregation they were appointed in plurality, that is, more than one man, two or more were appointed in each congregation. This means there was not one pastor or “the pastor” appointed in a church. This was done to safeguard the church from going into apostasy. Local church autonomy is thus the safety valve against full scale apostasy.



In the Bible we read of elders, bishops, pastors, shepherds, and overseers, all of these terms refer to the same type of person. That is, an elder is also a bishop, or a pastor, a shepherd and overseer. (Acts 20:17-29; Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Ephesians 4:11). Qualifications for those who would desire to be pastors or bishops

or elders in a church are described in the Scriptures, in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, as those who are older men or matured in years and age, not novice or young men. Further, they are to be blameless, and husband of one wife, that is married men, (this completely leaves out women being appointed as pastors or elders). Again, they should be temperate, soberminded, orderly, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent or brawler or quarrelsome, not striker, gentle, not covetous, not lover or greedy of money, one who rules his own house well, having faithful children, having children who believe; his children should be in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); of a good testimony, not self-willed. Not soon angry, a lover of good, just, holy, self-controlled, sound in faith, able to convince false teachers.

Elders, who were also called bishops or pastors worked as overseers or shepherds in the particular congregation or church in which they were appointed. That is, they did not have any overseeing authority over another congregation. The apostle Peter, who himself was an elder in a church wrote in 1 Peter 5:1-3 "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

In the beginning, in the church, there were no "Reverends" or "Fathers" as such were strictly forbidden by Christ. In Matthew 23:9 Christ taught, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; For One is your Father, He who is in heaven." The word reverend appears only once in the King James version of the Bible, in Psalm 111:9, which says, "holy and reverend is His name." All other translations render it as, holy and awesome or fearful is His name. No man should take upon himself the honour that belongs only to God. It is sinful (Acts 12:21-23). Also, the distinction between clergy and laity are of human origin. The apostle Paul at Galatians 3:28 said, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The apostle Peter also said that all Christians, male or female, are God's holy priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5,9). There is, therefore, no special priesthood in the church today.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

J. C. Choate



JESUS CHRIST WAS WITH God from “the beginning.” This is clearly seen in God’s statement concerning the creation of man. “And God said, Let us make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26).

After man fell and was driven from paradise then it was necessary that he should have a redeemer. Thus, we read the first promise that Christ would be that redeemer. Speaking to the serpent, God says, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15).

The Lord later promised Abraham that through his seed should all the nations of earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3). Christ was to be the fulfillment of this promise. (Galatians 3:26,29). This promise was repeated over and over to generation after generation. And God kept his promise,

It was also prophesied that Christ would come. For example, Isaiah said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:13). The entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah deals with the coming Redeemer. As a matter of fact, one can read about the Lord’s entire life by just reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. He may read of the birth of Christ, his childhood, his works, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. It was through the reading of the Old Testament that such men as the eunuch came to learn of the Christ. (Acts 8:29-40).

Finally, when we turn to Matthew 1:18, we have these words, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise....” And so we have the story of how Christ was born into this world. Notice some facts:

1. He was born of the virgin Mary. (Matthew 1:23).

2. His name would be Jesus. (Matthew 1:21)
3. He would save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21).

In connection with the Lord's coming there are many other facts that can be only briefly listed. Some of them include:

1. John was the forerunner of Christ. He prepared the way for the Lord. (John 1:6, 15; Luke 7:24-28).
2. Christ was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. (Luke 2:1; Matthew 2:19).
3. He grew up as most other boys of his day did. (Luke 3:51, 52).
4. At approximately thirty years of age he began his public ministry. (Luke 2:21-23).
5. He was baptized to set an example for others to follow. (Matthew 3:13-17).
6. He chose twelve apostles. (Matthew 10:24).
7. He sought not to condemn the law but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17, 18).
8. He was tempted of the devil. (Mark 1:12).
9. He was transfigured. (Luke 9:28)
10. He performed many miracles. (John 2:1; John 11:1; Luke 8).
11. He taught in parables. (Matthew 13:25; Luke 13).
12. He was betrayed by one of his own. (Matthew 26:47; John 18:2).
13. He was given a false trial. (Luke 23; John 19).
14. He died on the cross without sin for the sins of the world. (Romans 5:6-8)
15. He was buried and then resurrected three days later. (Matthew 26:28; John 19:20).
16. After giving the great commission he ascended to the Father in heaven. (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1).

John wrote, "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). Hence, the Lord kept his promise and all the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the coming and life of Christ. And all of these things have been recorded that we might be made to believe and be blessed thereby. (John 20:30,31).

The Bible teaches that Christ is Alpha and Omega, the first and last. He is likewise spoken of as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16). He was the greatest man to ever live, and yet, he was not just another man, but the Son of God. (Matthew 17:5). He is the Saviour of the world. He is all in all. Truly HE is.

Kindness To The Dead

Glenn Colley

AFTER WIDOWS NAOMI AND Ruth journeyed to Bethlehem and were first beginning to enjoy the benevolence of Boaz, Naomi praised his goodness with these words: *“Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead”* (Ruth 2:20).

It is easy to see what is meant by “kindness to the living,” but how was Boaz kind to the dead? The answer, of course, is that by seeing to the needs of Naomi and Ruth, Boaz was honoring the desires and memories of their deceased husbands, Elimelech and Mahlon. When caring for their wives, he was showing kindness posthumously to them.

The thought of kindness to the dead becomes practical and even sweeter to us when we consider those Christians who will be tenderhearted to our mate, children, or parents we leave behind when we die. Our Lord spoke through the agony of the cross to ask John to care for sweet Mary after His death (John 19:26,27). Few desires are deeper or more sentimental than this.

The Holy Scriptures contain many commands regarding the care of widows, for our Lord is very serious about how we treat those left behind when husband or father dies. Even before the Law of Moses, a Hebrew widow who had no children by her husband was allowed (and assumed) to marry the brother of her deceased husband, in order to be cared for and to raise up children (Genesis 38:6-11). Deuteronomy 25:5-7 commanded this union, and called it the brother’s duty.

Exodus 22:22,23 shows us the Fatherly eye from Zion guarding the interests of those left behind when a husband dies. God says, *“Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry.”* Deuteronomy 10:17,18 says, *“For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.”*

In our Lord’s stinging rebuke of the wicked Jews He said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation”* (Matthew 23:14). While it would, of

course, have been wrong to “devour” the house of anyone or to have defrauded others, Jesus specifically noted what His listeners did to the widows.

How much less does God care for the widows in our dispensation? No less. Paul teaches us to honor widows who are widows indeed, and desolate (1 Timothy 5:3-5). There were widows in the early church who, because of their poverty and need, were cared for at the expense of the Christians. This is proper and right today. We practice an impure religion if we do not care for widows and orphans. *“Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27).

Naomi, in praising the goodness of Boaz, taught us an added motivation and benefit for caring for widows: When we care for widows, we are caring for the living and the dead.

Burden Bearing

Bruce Buckley

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ....For each must bear his own load.” (Galatians 6:2,5).

WAS PAUL DEALING IN double talk? The answer is NO.

The BURDENS of verse 2 and verse 5 come from two Greek words looking to different situations. The burdens of verse 2 represent an overload, more than people can bear. If they do not have help, they will sink ... but this does not mean to take the burden from them, but simply to give help with the burden.

The burden of verse 5 has reference to the burden of a soldier. That burden had to be borne at all times. It could not be passed to another. We have burdens of many types today that cannot be passed to anyone else. There are physical burdens and disabilities that must be borne by individuals. We should try to get relief by medical means when and if possible, but in the long run, they must be borne, and hopefully without complaining. There are burdens of a non-physical nature also. Christianity places burdens on one that no other can bear. No other person can obey the Gospel for us; that is our burden. The practice of baptizing for those who are already dead is not according to the scriptures.

A sin may be forgiven, but its consequences may still remain a burden. Paul still had his thorn in the flesh and it was still a burden.

He said his past as blasphemer and persecutor was out of ignorance and unbelief.

But the beauty of all of this is that while we are busy bearing burdens that are ours, we are at the same time learning more how to bear the burdens of others "AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST" (Galatians 6:2). It is then that our own burdens become lighter and easier to bear.

God's Spiritual Blessings To Mankind

Don L. Norwood

THIS PSALM OF DAVID contains beautiful and simple statements, expressing the spiritual relationships between God and His faithful spiritual children. Let us study it carefully.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." To the Christian, Christ is Lord (Romans 10:8-10; Acts 2:36). He is also the bishop and shepherd of the Christian's soul (1 Peter 2:25). The statement "*I shall not want*" expresses the idea that as a faithful child of God one will always have all the spiritual and material blessings that one needs (Matthew 6:24-33; 1 Timothy 6:6-12).

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures." Using this terminology with the idea of a shepherd and his sheep out in the pasture, it suggests that as we follow our **Shepherd** and do **His will**, we will have peaceful rest for our souls from **the** troubles and cares of the world.

"He leads me beside the still waters." This suggests that the Lord **will** lead us in the kind of life that makes for stability and security (Philippians 4:4-8; Galatians 5:22,23).

"He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." After the rebirth, the person must learn and follow the teachings of Christ faithfully all the rest of his life (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Peter 1:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Physical death is inevitable for all people (Hebrews 9:27; Romans 5:12). A faithful Christian can face death with calm resolve and trust the Lord's promises relative to it (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 14:13). The rod and staff were

used by a shepherd to catch a wayward sheep and return him to the fold. This is symbolic of the Word of God which makes us understand the reason for death and how to prepare for it.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” A table prepared seems to symbolize the Lord’s spiritual communion with His people (1 Corinthians 11:23-30; John 6:48-58; 1 Corinthians 10:16,17). It may also include His care for His people in all their physical needs as well (Matthew 6:33).

“You anoint my head with oil.” Anointing one’s **head with oil** symbolizes the Lord’s care of His children when they are sick, and especially when they are spiritually ill (James 5:13-15; Luke 10:34; Isaiah 1:6; Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11).

“My cup runs over.” This symbolizes the fact that a child of God has more than he needs in all aspects of his life (John 10:10).

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” The Psalmist wrote, *“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about”* (Psalm 32:10).

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” While living in the flesh, the Christian is a member of God’s great household (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5,9,10). A home awaits the Christian in heaven (John 14:1-6; 1 Peter 1:4,5).

Wonderful Assurances

David Pharr

IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR a Christian to be concerned and even fearful over what he knows are shortcomings in his life. This lesson will consider a wonderful passage of Scripture which can help us see how God forgives our imperfections.

Read 1 John 1:6-2:6. After reading these verses carefully, go back and see the following truths from each verse.

Verse 6. “Walk” has reference to the life one lives. To walk in darkness means to live without the guiding light of God’s Word. A hypocrite—one who claims to be in fellowship with God while deliberately living in sin—is a liar.

Verse 7. What does it mean to *“walk in the light”*? It means to walk in the pathway of life that God has lighted for us (compare Psalm 119:105). When we live a life that is directed by God’s Word,

we have fellowship and Christ's blood cleanses us of all sin. Notice that "*walk in the light*" does not mean sinless perfection, because if it did, there would be no sins for the blood to cleanse. The point, therefore, is that a person can live a Christian life ("*walk in the light*") even though he may sometimes sin through ignorance and weakness.

Verses 8,10. The fact is that we all sin. No one lives absolutely above sin. As long as we are in the flesh we will have weaknesses and shortcomings. You are no different in this from any other Christian. It is this fact that makes the blood of Christ so vital to us. We are in constant need of the forgiveness He provides.

Verse 9. This verse tells us what we must do about our sins. We are to confess them. Remember that an alien sinner is required to be baptized for the remission of his sins. But after baptism we need only to confess them to be forgiven. To confess sins means to penitently acknowledge them, asking for forgiveness. Notice how certain it is that God forgives our sins when we confess them.

Chapter 2, verse 1. John, however, did not write these things to make us think sin does not matter. Instead, they are written "*that ye sin not.*" That is, that you make it your aim to overcome sin. No one walking in the light will want to commit sin. One who thinks he can just go ahead and sin now while thinking he can easily get forgiveness later does not really understand what it means to walk in the light.

Verses 1, 2. Still, when we are weak, when we do fail to do right, Jesus Christ has died to save us. God never fails to forgive His penitent children.

Verses 3-6. The way we know that we have the right relationship with God is by obeying His commands. Though we must admit that our obedience is imperfect, still we can know whether we have been baptized, whether we have quit deliberate acts of sin, whether we worship faithfully, etc.

A simple summary of the assurance of these verses might be worded this way: You know you have become a Christian. You are trying to live a Christian life. You know you often fail in this. But you confess your sins to God and to your brethren, and you know you are forgiven. Thus, by the grace of God and the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, you know you are God's child and that if you live and die in Him, you are on your way to heaven.

Bystanders In Contrast

Michael L. King

THE OBSERVERS OF THE LIFE and death of Christ were divided from day one as to who He really was. Some looked upon Him as Emmanuel, which means “*God with us,*” but Herod and his followers sought Him to “*destroy him,*” possibly due to the threat of having his kingship threatened (Matthew 1:23; 2:13).

Peter, speaking of Jesus, emphatically stated, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” while some of His other disciples viewed Him as John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the prophets (Matthew 16:13-16).

As Jesus began His ministry, confirming His words with miracles, “*his disciples believed on him*” (John 2:11), but the Pharisees, when they observed the works of Jesus, declared they were done “*by Beelzebub the prince of the devils,*” in spite of the fact that “*all the people were amazed and said, is not this the son of David?*” Their division prompted Jesus to further proclaim that “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand*” (Matthew 12:22-25).

More confusion arose during the final week of Christ’s existence than any other time during His earthly pilgrimage. Some said, “*Let him be crucified,*” and others asked, “*Why, what evil hath he done?*” (Matthew 27:23). While He was suspended on the cross, the scribes, chief priests, and elders challenged His ability to come down from the cross, denying His being the Son of God. Yet, at a distance were numerous staunch supporters, women who had followed Him from Galilee to minister unto Him. Among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (Mark 15:29-32;39-41). The women were decisive about Jesus and are often referred to as being “*The last at the cross and the first at the tomb.*” They surely witnessed the diversity of opinion of the two thieves. One doubtfully “*railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us,*” while the other thief said, “*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*” (Luke 23:39-43). Finally, observers could not agree as to whether the body of Jesus had actually been resurrected or stolen (Matthew 28:7,8; 12,13).

We are now separated by almost two thousand years from these historic events surrounding the life and death of Jesus. As we

observe, can you see a contrast in the onlookers which could cause division and leave those who are unbelievers confused and in a quandary? Christians must give consideration to the potential for mixed signals being given by their lives. Paul instructed the Corinthians to avoid divisions and to *“be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment”* (1 Corinthians 1:10). James reprimanded his readers for allowing their mouths to speak both *“blessing and cursing”* (James 3:10). Have we reached the time in our own personal lives when we *“ought to be teachers”* but *“have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”* (Hebrews 5:12-14)?

The Hebrews writer insists that we need to leave *“the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us go on unto perfection (maturity).”* If we are unable to do so, then we are not any different from those who crucified Christ. Those who *“were made partakers . . . and tasted the good word of God . . . and fall away; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”!* *“Let us go on unto perfection . . . and of faith toward God”* (Hebrews 6:1-6).

Are we active in bringing souls to Christ or are we repelling them by having an obstinate and divisive spirit? Which of the malefactors flanking Christ’s cross do we most closely resemble?

Simon Peter

Ray Hawk

HE WAS A GALILEAN fisherman with his brother Andrew, and his partners, James and John. Jesus called him Cephas, which means “a stone.” When the apostles are named, Simon is always the first to be mentioned.

Although John was the closest to Jesus, Peter was the forerunner in many areas. He was not bashful when it came to asking questions. *“Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?”* Nor was he hesitant in rebuking Jesus when he thought he was right. *“Never, Lord!”* he said. *“This shall never happen to you!”* Peter’s loyalty was fierce, and no one had to ask him where he stood. He declared, *“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”*

When others wanted information about Jesus, they usually went

to Peter. When Jesus asked questions of the apostles, Peter was usually the first to reply. He was not afraid to ask questions or to demand answers. *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"* He wanted to honor Jesus and spoke of this on different occasions. *"Lord, it is" good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."* Out of the Twelve, he was one of the inner three. Yet, Simon Peter was human.

In spite of his loyal statements, Jesus told Peter that his heart was in the wrong place, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."* In the garden, Jesus had asked His disciples to watch while He prayed, but Simon, with others, went to sleep. However, it was to Simon that Jesus addressed His remarks, *"Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"* Jesus told him that before the rooster crowed twice, he would deny Him three times. When Peter realized he had fulfilled that prophecy, he went out and *"wept bitterly."*

Jesus recognized the leadership abilities of Simon. He told him to *"Feed my sheep."* Here was a complicated man who at one time was not afraid to go against his culture and enter the house of a Gentile to preach to him, even if it meant criticism from some in the church. Yet, on another occasion, he feared what would be said and refused to associate with Gentile Christians.

Some may tend to think that Peter was more of a god than a man. We, like Cornelius, might bow before him. Yet, Peter would tell us what he told the centurion, *"Stand up, I myself also am a man."*

One cannot help but admire this fisherman who became an evangelist and an apostle. Although the Holy Spirit inspired his written and spoken messages, he was given no special speaking *ability* or supernatural powers to be *bold*. He, like Paul, could say, *"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God"* (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

One might classify Peter as a home-town boy who made good. But, when everything is said, if it had not been for Jesus, Peter

would have remained a nameless fisherman. Jesus took an outspoken man and turned him into one who spoke out for Him. He took a man who fed people with fish and made him into a feeder of human sheep. All that he was and became was because Jesus walked into his life. Peter had the wisdom to recognize that Jesus could make a difference. Do you?

In The Holy Of Holies

Doyle Kee

WHEN WE ARE IN THE Holy of Holies, we cannot at the same time be outside the Temple of God. When we are “in Christ” we cannot walk in the world. Either we are in the Kingdom of God or we are in the kingdom of darkness. We are either a child of God or a child of the devil. Holy Scripture does not speak of an intermediate relationship. Though the Lord does speak of one who is not far from the Kingdom, he cannot yet be declared “in” the Kingdom.

If one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not, and cannot, belong to Him (Romans 8:9). We are either among the forgiven or among those who still carry the unmanageable burden of the guilt of their sins.

This sharp distinction of only two categories of spiritual location or relationship is not popular. Tolerance is the acceptable word. To have such a black and white perception suggests a lack of love. It is considered a sectarian spirit. The “narrow” way of which Jesus spoke continues to elude many people in conception and reality. The debate of whom God will accept into the eternal holy sanctuary will continue. It is possible, though, to have peace and joy because we have personally terminated the discussion. Assurance comes from the historical fact that we have entered the presence of God through the blood of Jesus. Obedience to the gospel guarantees that we will never be separated from God’s presence. Scripture declares, though, that this will not be the case for many, for “those who do not know God, and [on] those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8).

We will either be “in” or “out” of the Holy of Holies. Thanks be to God that we can be “in” through the door of His Son. Let us work to point those who are “out” toward the only sanctuary in which it is possible to share the eternal presence of our Beloved.

The Seeds Of Evangelism

Clayton Pepper

BEHOLD A SOWER WENT FORTH to sow the seeds of evangelism in the hearts of Christians so that more reapers would go forth to reap the harvest of lost souls.

The Sower told of the love of God for the lost, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

He said Christ had suffered in man’s place in order to pay the price of man’s redemption. *“But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

He quoted the charge given by Jesus to His disciples, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation...”* (Mark 16:15). He said these words apply to His disciples today.

He then pointed to the command of Paul, *“And the things that thou has heard of Me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2). The sower reminded his listeners that all have been given talent and opportunity and that Jesus was like *“A man traveling into a far country who called together his servants and delivered unto them his goods.”* Later, he returned for a day of reckoning. The Sower concluded with the warning that Christ will surely return; a day of reckoning will come for each of us, to determine how we used our talents in the work that He left in our charge (cf. Matthew 25:14-30).

How The Hearers Responded

- Some seed fell upon hard and indifferent hearts and the devil took away the word lest they should believe and obey. **They thought it was someone else’s job, not theirs.**
- Others became antagonistic; **they said the lost were willingly ignorant.** If they wanted to hear the gospel, they would come to the church building.
- Some were prejudiced against **any change in their methods** that would reach more people.
- Some said, “You cannot reach the people here, **they will not listen.**”

In response, The Sower told of the great success that many congregations were having by **training soul winners who taught from house to house like Paul and the early Christians did.** “*And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ*” (Acts 5:42). “*How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house*’ (Acts 20:20).

- Some said, “**Where would we get the workers?**”
- Others said, “**We are doing all right like we are.**”

The Sower concluded that they had rather let the people remain in ignorance and be lost than to put forth the effort to save them!

The Sower thought of the words of Jesus to those of His day, “*Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves nor permit them that are entering to go in*” (Matthew 23:13)

Response of the Second Group

The second congregation who heard the Sower said, “This is a great lesson; we should begin at once.” So they did.

Their previous teaching in the church was largely void of how to reach the lost. **Their Bible class literature was primarily written to defend the faith, not to advance it.** The preacher said **he had not been not taught how to reach the lost in school, except for public preaching.**

However, *in the presence of many doubters and in the absence of preparation* they began. Since they had not studied how to be effective, many mistakes were made. Some of the workers got discouraged and quit. Some criticized the work. After all, to them faithfulness to God had always been regular church attendance, good moral living, and helping meet the church budget. If many came to church gatherings that was great, if only a few came they were still content. Since this group made up the majority they began to murmur against the work.

The elders knew that what the sower had said was true, but **they felt that God had given them the right to decide whether they should or should not use all available means to reach the lost.** To them the work seemed to be *optional*. Since there were complaints, they decided to stop the program. Soul winning was no longer supported or encouraged.

The Sowers thought of all the times he had heard the denominations condemned for not respecting biblical authority. **This**

group had grossly disrespected the authority of God.

The Sower thought also of the times he had heard those words from the last chapter of Revelation quoted, “*I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book*” (Revelation 22:18,19).

Response of the Third Group

The Sower then visited another congregation where he sowed the seeds of evangelism. They responded enthusiastically. They studied very carefully how others had been successful. There was much motivation for several months. The preacher seemed to put a priority on bringing the lost to Christ. He and the elders were active, they led the way.

But with the passing of months, other things seemed to become more important. At last, little was said about reaching the lost. The leaders became less involved in providing the example. The preacher seldom mentioned sin or lost souls in his sermons. Workers in evangelism began to feel that evidently it was not a very important task. Making a living, business interests and material gain seemed to take precedence. Recreational activities again became the focus of group activities of the church. A great deal more was said about losing a ball game than losing a soul. Bowling, golfing, fishing, gardening and other hobbies seemed to take up the members' extra time.

The Sower thought of how the scriptures say that **the cares of the world**, the deceitfulness **of** riches **and** pleasures would choke the word out **of** the lives of many and they **would bring forth** no fruit (Luke 8). He thought of the Christians at Ephesus who had left their first love, and of those at Laodicea who were lukewarm and were told to repent (Revelation 2,3). Such heartbreaking thoughts of people who held God's truth in their very hands, yet lost all!

Response of the Fourth Group

The Sower visited a fourth congregation and there again he sowed the seeds of evangelism. This seed fell on good and honest hearts. They were people of prayer and love for each other. They gladly received the Word. The leaders arranged for a group of key people to visit a fast-growing soul-winning church. They studied

their program. They studied how they had developed an evangelistic Bible school.

The preacher regularly read and studied church growth materials. He was always enthusiastic and sought to keep the congregation enthusiastic about reaching the lost.

The elders and preacher realized that attitudes had changed and that they must have an **evangelistic plan for outreach** and not depend only on **programs** designed to reach those **who** would come to **the building**. They read books that would help them plan greater activities toward reaching the lost. They led the way. At least once each year they paid the expenses of key workers to attend a church growth and soul-winning workshop. Some of the elders always accompanied the group.

The elders said that the Jerusalem church practiced daily evangelism and had daily conversions, *“Praising God, and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved”* (Acts 2:47). *“And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ”* (Acts 5:42).

They reasoned that in the past they had set goals for **attendance** and goals for **contributions**, but that they should also set goals for **conversions**. They concluded that all of our programs must have evangelistic content, and that *edification is not an end in itself*, it is **means to the end of reaching the lost**. *Benevolence is not an end*; it is a **means toward reaching the lost**.

The Sower then thought of the growth of the first church, the Jerusalem church, under the leadership of the apostles—how they taught daily and had additions daily. They longed for a renewal of the church which would have the spirit of evangelism to be like that congregation, with its first priority the reaching of the lost.

WHEN WAS PAUL SAVED?

Owen D. Olbricht

MANY PREACHERS AND RELIGIOUS teachers say that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. The assumption is made that Jesus' appearing to him brought about his salvation. Is this true? What proof is offered that he was saved when Jesus appeared to him?

Three reasons are usually given for the basis of the conclusion

that Paul was saved at that time: (1) Jesus appeared to him for the purpose of giving him salvation. (2) Jesus gave him the Holy Spirit as a seal of his salvation. And (3) Ananias called him “brother Saul” when he came to him.

Nothing is said in the New Testament to indicate that Jesus appeared to Paul in order to save him. Such a teaching is merely an assumption and not a stated fact. If Jesus appeared to him for this purpose, this was an exception and not the rule. Nowhere is it recorded that Jesus appeared to any others in order to save them. In all other cases a God-approved preacher preached Jesus and salvation (Acts 2:36-38; Acts 8:12, 35-39; 11:14):

The text shows that Paul was not an exception. Jesus did not tell him what to do, but rather told him, *“Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”* (Acts 9:6). Ananias, whom Jesus sent, told Paul to *“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). The appearance of Jesus was not for the purpose of bringing about salvation. Paul stated that *“Last of all he was seen of me also”* (1 Corinthians 15:8). If seeing Jesus brings about salvation, then Paul was the last person to be saved. Jesus explained why He appeared to Paul. He did not say He appeared to him in order to save *him*. He said, *“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee”* (Acts 26:16). This was Paul’s call by Jesus to be an apostle. He could not witness with the other apostles the resurrection (Acts 1:22) had he not seen the resurrected Lord. Paul argued that he was an apostle, based on his having seen Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:1).

The New Testament does not state when Paul received the Holy Spirit. The safe conclusion is that he did not receive the Holy Spirit until after baptism. We know that Paul did not receive the Holy Spirit on the road to Damascus, because three days later when Ananias (Acts 9:9) came to Paul he had not received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

The most likely conclusion is that Paul was not an exception but that he received the Holy Spirit as others received Him. Those who are baptized (Acts 2:38), obey Jesus (Acts 5:32), becoming sons of God (Galatians 4:6), and are the ones who receive the Holy Spirit. The only exception to this rule that is recorded in the New Testament were the first Gentiles, Cornelius’ household, to whom the Holy Spirit was given in order to prove to Jewish Christians that God

would accept Gentiles (Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:7,8).

The fact that Ananias called Paul, “brother Saul,” is not proof that Paul was already saved. Peter called his fellow Jews, “brethren” (Acts 2:29), but then told them to “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38).

On other occasions, Peter also called fellow Jews brethren (Acts 3:17), as did Stephen (Acts 7:2), and Paul (Acts 13:26,38; 22:1; 23:1, 5, 6; 28:17). Ananias did not call him “brother Saul” because he was a brother in Christ, but because he was a brother Jew.

According to Ananias, Paul’s sins were not forgiven **until he was baptized** (Acts 22:16). Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus but, rather, he was saved when his sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus at the time of his baptism (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

God does not show partiality. We must obey Him in order to be saved (Hebrews 5:9) now that Christ has all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18-20). He said we must, “*Believe and be baptized,*” in order to be saved (Mark 16:15,16), which is what Paul did to have his sins forgiven (Acts 22:16).

THE KINGDOM IN PROPHECY

Frank Chesser

THE KINGDOM AND THE church are one and the same (Matthew 16:18, 19). The kingdom was to be established during the lifetime of Jesus’ contemporaries (Mark 9:1). It was “*at hand*” in the first century (Matthew 4:17). It was to come “*with power*” (Mark 9:1). That power was to come with apostolic reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Gospel that was to usher in the kingdom was to be preached first in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

These promises join and culminate in Acts 2, resulting in the kingdom, or church. Jesus is presently reigning on the spiritual throne of David, in the kingdom, or church of the living God (Acts 2:29-33). At the second coming, the world will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10), and Jesus will deliver the kingdom, or church, back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Thus, the concept of a thousand year reign in a physical kingdom is only a figment of man’s imagination.

The Old Testament anticipates the kingdom. God's promise to David regarding his kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16) transcends the old physical kingdom of Israel to enjoy ultimate fulfillment in the universal spiritual kingdom, the church. This is not human guesswork. This truth is verified by David's own statement in Psalm 132:11 and the plainly stated fulfillment in Acts 2:29-33. This text explicitly declares that Jesus is now reigning on David's spiritual throne, which is the kingdom or church of the New Testament. As people obeyed the Gospel, they were added by God Himself to that very church and thus, they submitted themselves to the Kingship of Jesus (Acts 2:47).

Isaiah 9:6,7 is an undeniable prophecy of the coming of Christ. This text promises that Jesus would sit "*upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever*" (Isaiah 9:7). This prophecy has absolutely nothing to do with a physical kingdom, throne, rule, and a thousand year reign.

The Jews of the first century had that concept of the kingdom, and Jesus denied it for the three years of His earthly ministry. He stressed time and again the spiritual nature of His kingdom as described in John 18:36. Again, Acts 2 makes it plain that Jesus is sitting on the throne of that very kingdom and has been since the first Pentecost following His resurrection.

Daniel 2:44 prophesies of the establishment of the kingdom "*in the days of these kings.*" Who were those kings? Nebuchadnezzar's image consisted of four basic parts: head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass; and legs and feet of iron, mixed with clay in the feet (Daniel 2:31-33). Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that these four parts represented four kingdoms, commencing with Babylon as the head of gold.

The Babylonian kingdom was followed by the Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom, and finally the Roman kingdom. It was in the days of the kings of this fourth kingdom that the Lord's kingdom would be established. This harmonizes with all the other passages on this subject. The church or kingdom was indeed established during the rule of the Roman kings in the first century on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2).

What is the law of this kingdom? Jeremiah prophesied of its spiritual nature (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Hebrews writer quoted this prophecy and applied it to the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-13). Consequently, Jesus is now reigning over His kingdom (church)

and is ordering its worship, work, and practice by His law revealed in the New Testament.

The Gospel Is For All

Earl Edwards

WHILE HERE ON THE EARTH, Jesus once said to His disciples, *“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields, that they are white for harvest”* (John 4:35).

I am convinced that if Jesus were to speak directly to those of us in the church today He would tell us first of all to *“lift up”* our eyes to see the sad spiritual plight of many in our world. He would say that it should be evident that they need the Gospel. Second, He would tell us to *“lift up”* our eyes to re-evaluate the spiritual *“help”* available in our great God (Psalm 27:9,10; 131:1-3,8). But perhaps, above all, He would tell us, as He did those first century disciples, to *“lift up”* our eyes to the *“fields”* that are *“white for harvest.”* He would remind us that He desires that we *“make disciples of all the nations”* (Matthew 28:19), for *“the gospel is for all.”*

Those who have spiritual needs and the God who can fill their needs must be brought together, and that is the job of Christians who have gained spiritual vision from Christ. Returning to our text in John chapter four, notice that Jesus disdains material food, because He sees people streaming out from the village of Sychar (verse 30). He sees fields that are *“white for harvest”* (verse 35).

Today there are urgent spiritual needs, and the church that has vision and is really *“of Christ”* will recognize the urgency of the work which needs to be done. Likewise, the person that is really a person of vision, a mature Christian, will feel that urgency.

White Fields Around The World

The Lord said, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (Matthew 28:19). Mature Christian individuals and obedient churches will never be satisfied with going to only one nation when the Lord said *“all nations.”* We must therefore, *“lift up”* our eyes to the *“white fields”* of the rest of the world. We must, as Paul did, endeavor to *“preach the Gospel”* where Christ has not already been *“named”* so that those who *“had no news of Him”* shall *“see”* and *“understand”* (Romans 15:20,21). It is true that churches of Christ have made

some progress in reaching such nations in the last few years. In fact, in 1939, when World War II broke out, we had only a few struggling churches of Christ in all of Europe, and all of these were in Great Britain. By 1977 we had about 195 churches of Christ in 20 of Europe's 35 countries, so we have made some progress, but much is yet to be done. In fact, in Italy, where this writer worked as a missionary for 16 years, we have about 1200 Christians meeting in 45 or so congregations. And in Moscow, where he preached last summer, there are perhaps 100 members of the church of Christ. But, it must be kept in mind that Italy has a population of 62 million people and Moscow alone counts 12 million people. Thus, we have barely touched the hem of the garment in these places.

We Need To Take The Gospel To All

We must remember that Jesus said to *"make disciples of all the nations."* Somehow we are not as committed to that task as we should be. J.M. McCaleb was a missionary for churches of Christ in Japan in the period from 1891 until approximately 1941. After he had worked in Japan for numerous years, one of his several supporting churches wrote him saying that it had decided to cut its support to him and redirect it to the "heathen" people of the U.S.A. McCaleb was so dedicated that he secured a secular job to be able to continue teaching the Japanese that he loved. However, it was on that occasion that he also wrote the great hymn that we often sing—"The Gospel is for All." Do you remember the words?

Of one the Lord has made the race,
Thro' one has come the fall;
Where sin has gone must go His grace:
The gospel is for all.

Say not the heathen are at home,
Beyond we have no call,
For why should we be blessed alone?
The gospel is for all.

Brethren, our God is a great God, and a languishing world needs to hear of His love and mercy. And, if we really decide to give of ourselves to reach these *"white fields,"* we will learn by experience that it really is *"more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).

We Must Focus On Others

But let me remind us that if we are going to be the kind of people

that “get the job done” for the Lord we must be people with wisdom who “*lift up*” our eyes to the fields. We must quit focusing on ourselves and think of others. God help us all to think of others, and, when we do, we will become people with vision who will indeed “*lift up*” their eyes to the “*white fields*,” because they know that the Gospel is indeed for all men.

Is Conscience a Safe Guide?

Basil Overton

“*THERE IS A WAY THAT seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 16:25). There are many who think that it does not matter what one believes or does in religion, just so he follows his conscience. But this philosophy exalts one’s conscience above the Word of God; this philosophy makes one’s conscience his guide instead of the Bible. Instead of conscience being a *safe guide*, it must be *safely guided* by the Word of God. Conscience approves or disapproves, as it has been instructed. If conscience has been instructed wrongly, it may approve of things that are wrong, or even disapprove of things that are right. A misguided conscience can mislead; this is often the case.

Surely, almost all of us have had the experience of honestly taking the wrong road in traveling, going several miles, feeling all the time that we were on the right road. Just to *feel* that we are right in religion does not *make* us right. We have to check the “road map” to heaven—the Bible—to find out what is really right. If we do not do this, and instead just follow conscience, we thus exalt conscience above God’s Word.

Conscience must be properly instructed by God’s Word before it can guide correctly. If one travels in his car on the wrong road, he turns around when he discovers his error, and proceeds to find the right road. He would surely not get angry at the person who told him he was on the wrong road, but would likely be grateful to him.

Friend, do not depend on the guidance of your feelings; look in God’s road map, the Bible, and see if you are on the right road. “*For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there he which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:13,14).

VERSES Every Christian Should Know

Ken Tyler

1. **The right attitude toward the Bible**—Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18,19; John 10:35; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9; Matthew 7:21-23.
2. **We live under the law of Christ—not the law of Moses**—Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:1-7; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11; Hebrews 9:15-17.
3. **The one church**—Matthew 16:13-19; Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:16.
4. **The beginning of the church**—Acts 2:37-42,47.
5. **The plan of salvation**—**Hear**—(Romans 10:17); **Believe** (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:16); **Repent** (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30); **Confess** Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10); **Be baptized** (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).
6. **Baptism is a burial**—Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; John 3:23.
7. **Worship in spirit and in truth**—John 4:23,24; Matthew 15:9.
8. **Worship on Sunday, the first day of the week**—**Lord's Supper** (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20; Matthew 26:17,26-29; Acts 2:42); **Giving** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2); **Preaching** (Acts 20:7); **Praying** (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2); **Singing** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); **Studying** (Acts 20:7).
9. **The organization of the church**—Philippians 1:1.
10. **The qualifications of bishops and deacons**—1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4.
11. **Elders, bishops, and pastors are descriptive terms that refer to the same men**—Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1,2; Titus 1:5,7.
12. **The role of women**—1 Timothy 2:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:34.