

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com>

Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 1)

Ken Chumbley

I received (unrequested) in the mail, a book titled, *Ten Commandments Twice Removed*, co-authored by Danny Shelton and Shelley Quinn, published by Remnant Publications of Coldwater, MI. I am sure that I was not the only one to receive the book since it had a non-profit U.S. Post Permit, where a stamp would go, on the label. The publishers were doing a mass mailing to preachers in various churches.

I thought that the authors had come up with some new arguments to bind the Ten Commandments upon Christians. However, having browsed the book, it appears to be the same old, tired, arguments that have been offered by those who have sought to bind the keeping of the Fourth Commandment—the Sabbath—upon Christians. I plan to examine the book more closely and then comment on some of their arguments in detail. In this article, I want to note just a couple of points that stood out as I casually looked through the book.

Upon opening the book, the first inside page before the title page, is a quotation of the Commandment Law from Exodus 20:2-

17 (NKJV). Note, carefully, what verses two and three states.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Who was this law given to? It was given to those whom the LORD God had brought out of the land of Egypt. Who was it that God had brought out of the land of Egypt? Was it all of those who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ since the day of Pentecost that followed His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension? Or did it have reference to those whom God had brought out of Egyptian bondage under the leadership of Moses through whom He had given this law to the people? The verses clearly answer this question. So, the very premise of their book is overthrown by the first verse of Scripture that is quoted, before the authors have even to begun to argue their case!

It is also interesting to note, in this regard, that—unless in browsing the book, I have missed it—they do not refer to the second passage in the Old Testament that lists this Ten Commandment Law. Could it be that they realized that

the passage in Deuteronomy 5 is more devastating to their argument and so just simply ignored it? Note what is stated by Moses in the preamble to reciting that Law:

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who *are* all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) (Deu. 5:1-4).

Moses clearly states that God made a “covenant with us in Horeb.” Who was he talking with? “Hear, O Israel” which is the children of Israel. He goes on to state that it was not made “with our fathers,” that is preceding generations. Moses says he is to recite in their ears what follows, that is the Ten Commandments (5:6-21). The covenant that was made with the

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Drawing Power

After feeding about 5,000 men besides women and children, Jesus perceived that the Jews would attempt to take Him by force and make Him king (in a physical sense) over them. Thus, He departed from them into a mountain and prays. At evening, His apostles head to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but Jesus was not with them. The wind prevented the apostles from reaching the other side and Jesus walks on the water producing fear in them. Jesus told them, "It is I; be not afraid" (John 6:20). What a wonderful lesson that with Jesus, we do not need to fear. After taking Jesus into the ship, they were at land. The next day the people looked for Jesus and finally find Him on the other side. They asked Jesus how He got there, and Jesus responded by saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (6:26). Jesus addresses the main problem with these Israelites (and with the majority of people today): they were physically minded instead of spiritually minded. They were willing to work for the physical meat (by searching Jesus out) but they were

not willing to work for the spiritual food that would produce eternal life (6:27). While they wish to know what work they must do to do the works of God, they were not really willing to do such.

Jesus begins teaching them a lesson on what belief in the One God had sent really involves (6:29). He is the bread of life that has come down out of heaven and gives life to the world (6:33). They must "eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood" to have that life (6:53-56). In the midst of this teaching, Jesus says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (6:44).

The denominational world and Calvinists misuse this passage regularly to teach their Calvinism error. They teach that since man is totally depraved and can do nothing that pleases God, God is the one who has to do everything. Thus, their doctrine that salvation is wholly or totally by God's grace. So, for those whom God predetermined to save, God must then do something for them: The Father must draw them to Christ since man can do nothing that would please God. They often think that by referencing this one passage, they have established their error. However, to add to their problems, they must ignore how Jesus says the Father draws them to Him as revealed in the next verse: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (6:45). The ones who come to Christ (are drawn to Him by the Father) are those who have been taught and learned. While

speaking to the Jews of His day and thus He references the prophets (the Old Testament), the principles are the same of hearing, teaching, and learning are the means by which the Father draws people to Christ.

Realizing how the Father draws people to Christ (hearing, teaching, learning), it is no surprise Paul instructed his son in the faith, Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Peter would state that "If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). The reason should be obvious, by preaching the Word and speaking the oracles of God, we are drawing men to Christ. This is also why Paul would teach that the Gospel is God's power to save: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16), and James statement that the Word of God has the ability to save: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jam. 1:21).

The early church knew these principles, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans (8:5) and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian (8:35). Saul (later Paul) preached Christ in the synagogues (9:20). We continue to observe the early church drawing others to Christ by teaching the Gospel. They knew what would save and knew what would not avail, so Paul would write, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

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It appears as if many churches of Christ today have moved away from these principles being influenced by the social gospel movement even though many have not embraced the entirety of the movement (and some will even rail against it). We first started observing this by some attempting to make the church provide entertainment and/or recreation for members. There was often the cry made that we must do something for our young people. We started having sports teams so we could compete with the denominations (can you not see Jesus encouraging His followers to have sporting events with the “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” of His day, or the apostle Paul telling the churches to whom he wrote to engage in sporting events with the Judaizing teachers, Jews, etc.). The Scriptures teach: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17) and not “Wherefore go out and play ball with them and join with them saith the Lord, and make sure you hit the ball/make the basket, and you will be successful.”

Many congregations seeing the denominations building gymnasiums continued their imitation and began building them. Apparently knowing the opposition such would face (especially by older members), they often gave other names to their gyms (i.e., family life centers). This craze extended to other areas also. Now, we are beginning to see numerous congregations ape the denominations in having various functions centering on Easter and Christmas. Then there is the trunk-or-treat to pro-

vide candy to children during Halloween. One congregation in this area decided to throw a *shindig* for the members of the local high school football team and their family members (and this congregation has been known for being conservative). I just saw an advertisement of a Barbeque to raise funds and the organization would also donate xx% of the proceeds to the church. We have slowly been conditioned that activities such as these are acceptable to God without any consideration for having authority from God for them.

We have through the years forgotten that the drawing power is to be the teaching of Christ as revealed in God’s Word. It is the Gospel that saves and not the innovations of man. Many have seemed to forget the principle that whatever a person is *won* by, it takes more of that to keep him. If we win someone by entertainment, recreation, food, and folly, then it will take more and better of the same or else he will leave for *greener* pastures. However, if we win a person by the Gospel, then there will be the desire for spiritual growth through the Word of God. It is the Scriptures that provide the proper spiritual nourishment that will take us from a newborn babe to spiritual maturity. Peter wrote, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The only way one will desire the spiritual unguiled milk is to be preaching the Word and speaking as the oracles of God: not by food, fun, and frolic.

Additionally, let us make sure that our preaching and our sermons are based on and filled with Bible. Instead of moralizing, story-

telling, Norman-Vincent-Pealeism, emotionalism, let us get back to Bible-based and Bible-filled teaching. Let us dig deep into the Word

and teach it to members and non-members. Let us always remember that the implanted Word is that is able to save the soul (Jam. 1:21)

and is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16).

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children of Israel, not their predecessors, was that which, at least, included the Ten Commandments thus it was given to the children of Israel—not others. Deuteronomy 5:6 states: “I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” This shows very clearly and specifically those to whom the law was given. The second point is with respect to what they write concerning Acts 20:7 (where the first day of the week is mentioned and the brethren at Troas had met to break bread). Note what the writers state:

In the second reference [the second reference to the “first day of the week”], Acts 20:7, the disciples were gathered together to break bread with Paul for his final farewell

meeting before he departed on his journey. Luke records this was on the “first day of the week,” beginning at sunset on Saturday. It appears Paul had a lot to say in his farewell message. He prolonged his sermon until midnight. Poor Eutychus nodded off during the sermon and fell from the third floor to his death. Many believe the only reason Luke recorded this incident was because God performed a miracle through Paul and brought the young man back to life. Then Paul continued talking until Sunday morning, daylight of the first day of the week.

Such is the totality of their comments regarding the passage. They cavalierly dismiss it as being simply the recording of a miracle. They assume, without evidence, that they must have been following Jewish time, but such does not

negate the fact they were meeting on the first day of the week, not the Sabbath. Further, they give no proof of the statement that “Many believe the only reason Luke recorded this incident was because God performed a miracle.” The writers take no account of context where we see that Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost (Acts 20:16) but had stayed seven days in Troas to “break bread” with the disciples. If “breaking of bread” meant a common meal rather than the Lord’s Supper, why did He not have them meet at another time? Nor do they consider the meaning of the phrase “when the disciples came together,” indicating that this was a regular matter.

More to come.

Deceased

Quit Blaming Bible Study and Prayer

Gary W. Summers

Our message to liberals today is: “Quit blaming Bible study and prayer for your decision to depart from the faith!”

Ordinarily we encourage brethren to study the Word and to pray. The church has engaged profitably in these activities since the first century, and many problems have been avoided by a careful consideration and application of the Scriptures. However, in this century just the opposite has happened. Every discontented brother (and especially sister) that says,

“We’re going to study this subject for 3 to 6 months,” ends up ignoring what the Bible teaches on the role of women.

No one can imagine why they waste time studying the matter—when they already know what conclusions they are going to draw. Why do they not just stand up like men—or the women who have goaded them into action—and say, “We know what the Bible teaches, but we’re going to change what we do in worship.” No, instead they attribute their change

of position to Bible study and prayer.

The most recent church to do this is the Downtown Church in Searcy, Arkansas, and it is reported in *The Bison*, a Harding University Student publication (Nov. 15, 2019). Here is the opening paragraph of the story:

After several months of careful study, discussion and prayer, members of Downtown Church of Christ are focused on maintaining unity as the church moves in a new direction, specifically regarding women’s roles.

Now, honestly, does anyone need to finish reading the article? Most could probably complete writing the story without any more information, since it is so predictable. But at the outset, let it be stressed that the changes of the roles of women did not come as a result of genuine Bible study, or they would have remained unchanged. God did not answer their prayers by saying, “I didn’t really mean what I wrote in 1 Timothy 2:8-15.”

These so-called Christians are a disgrace to James Harding and others of his generation who labored diligently to establish the Lord’s church and Christian colleges, upon whom now they turn their back. They are a shame and a disgrace to the Holy Spirit who authored the now-abused Bible texts, and they are a disgrace and a disappointment to the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died that all might be saved.

If we have the right to reject the truth that is clearly set forth in the Word in one area, then there is no stopping point. We may as well study the Lord’s Supper for several months and pray about that—with the result being that we only observe the death of Christ twice a year (guess when?).

Unity

Notice that one of the claims was the importance of maintaining unity. Did unity not prevail in the northern kingdom when Jeroboam introduced the golden calves and made priests out of men from the various tribes? Did anyone complain? Did anyone challenge the slip into idolatry, violating a clear commandment of God about making no graven im-

ages of anything upon the earth (Exo. 20:4)? If anyone did object, we have no record of it. Maybe Jeroboam had the leaders of the northern kingdom study the subject for months, then discuss it and pray about it (1 King 12:25-33), although that is doubtful. But what would the difference be?

So, now the Downtown Church in Searcy has unity in error. Those at the Tower of Babel did also (Gen. 11). What good is unity if it is not based on truth? The tribe of Benjamin refused to turn over the perverted men of Gibeah (Jud. 19-20). Their stubborn unity nearly caused the tribe to become extinct. Is this the kind of unity that the church ought to seek? Yes, the church in Searcy is moving in a new direction, all right—away from the Word of God.

Well on the Way

The congregation, first of all, affirmed some of the practices they were already doing; one of these involved women “singing on the praise team.” Well, let us see. What verse discusses praise teams? Perhaps it can be found in Colossians 3:16½. No, because verse 17 says that everything we teach and practice must be authorized. If we cannot do it in the name of Jesus Christ, then it ought not to be done.

“Well,” someone might ask, “where’s the authority for the song leader?” It is implied by 1 Corinthians 14:40—that in worship everything should be done decently and in order. When we sing, someone needs to select the song so we all can sing the same one. Second, it is helpful if we all start about the same time. Third, an added bonus accrues if we all

have the same pitch. One person can achieve these goals. Why would we have two, four, eight, or more people to do the same thing? One male can eliminate whatever confusion there might be. No authority exists for a team—much less a team with female leaders in it.

To this practice the Downtown Church wants to add women serving communion, reading Scriptures from the pulpit, and teaching adult Bible classes (presumably with men in them). All of these are positions of actual (or perceived) authority. Women teaching men is expressly forbidden. No amount of study or prayer can get rid of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Reading the Scriptures constitutes teaching. Women serving the bread and fruit of the vine may be the least noxious of the three, but they still have the appearance of authority.

How Much Unity?

Lest anyone think the elders of the Searcy Church think they are going soft on these matters, they have definitely decided that there will be no “female shepherds or preachers.” Why does this fact fail to comfort us? Well, for one thing, that conclusion was determined by only a 2/3 vote. So, if there are 12 elders currently, that means it was an 8 to 4 vote. It is not uncommon for elders to resign or pass away. Suppose two of the majority view die and three more are appointed whose sympathies lie with the four. Suddenly it is a 7-6 vote. Of course, there would need to be another several months of studies, along with discussion and prayer. Then one might expect female preachers and elders to be

added. Can someone guarantee that such a scenario would not occur?

One of the current elders, Dr. Pat Garner, tried to justify the recent decision by citing changes in culture. He spoke of how we live in a time of “both great and rapid socio-cultural change.” Some of those changes polarize communities. “Is it even possible,” he asks, “to maintain a body with a transcendent unity in the midst of divergent opinions?”

Another doctor, named Luke, answered that question in Acts 2:42: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” As a result of these measures, the entire community (most of whom were Jews) were not united, but all the Christians were—because they all paid heed to what the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, taught! Unity with the world will never exist, but unity with brethren cannot be maintained, either, when some determine to walk away from spiritual truths.

What will the Downtown Church in Searcy do when they realize that homosexuality, as a sin (not to mention homosexual *marriages* in the community), is a socio-cultural change polarizing people? Will they pray about that and then decide that unrepentant homosexuals can be part of the church? The Downtown Church’s approach to the cultural divide is downright dangerous. Actually, Paul addressed culture. After giving the command that women must not teach or have authority over a man, but be in silence, he explained why:

For Adam was formed first. then

Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Tim. 2:13-14).

“Well, I don’t see anything about socio-culture situations there,” someone may protest. That is exactly the point. God made the decisions concerning leadership in the home and in the church before any culture existed besides that of Adam and Eve. The leadership of males was doubly-determined. God created Adam first, thus implying a leadership role. He failed to exercise leadership in the garden, or he might have stopped Eve from disobedience. Second, Adam remains the spiritual leader because he was not the one deceived.

These two facts are not going to change regardless of what happens in today’s society or culture. This is one of those principles that has been the case in the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Age, and the Christian Age. It has not been rescinded, and there will be no amendment to replace it. The reality of the situation has nothing to do with society in the first century or any other century. It has never been an issue of culture.

Fellowship

So, how are brethren supposed to react to the Downtown Church? Will they just continue as though nothing has happened? Will they write a letter or call the elders to see if they will discuss the matter further? Ultimately, they must decide whether or not to fellowship the almost 2,000 members. Probably, members there are related to members in other churches over a great deal of Arkansas, and what is the connection between the Downtown Church and Harding University?

Are some of the elders board members? How close are the ties?

Are some going to say, “Personally, I am against their decision, but they are too big a congregation not to fellowship”? Or maybe some will say, “Brethren have invested way too much time, effort, and money in Harding University to allow it to fail now. It’s not as though they are not teaching the truth on salvation.” Or, “Think of how much good they are accomplishing. We can’t turn our backs on that.”

All of these are excuses. As Brother Guy N. Woods said, “An excuse is a lie wrapped in tissue paper.” Did the size of each congregation matter when Jesus had John write to the seven churches in Revelation? No. As for the, “it’s too big to fail,” philosophy, that is exactly how apostasy spreads. No one is willing to take a stand, and it just encourages other churches and institutions to follow the same ungodly path. When people fail to stand up and be counted, the problem escalates; it seldom, if ever, diminishes. Third, how much good are they going to accomplish by opposing the explicit teaching of the New Testament? That message will not be overlooked.

What does Jesus think about what the Downtown Church has done? Has He already removed their candlestick? Will He come upon them at an hour they know not? Will He spew them out of His mouth? One thing is certain: He knows their works. Only He knows how much time those elders/pastors/shepherds have to repent, which they sorely need to do. The remainder of us might pray that they will do so.

Winter Park, FL

God's Holy Word

Marvin L. Weir

The Psalmist succinctly states, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path. I have sworn, and have confirmed it, That I will observe thy righteous ordinances” (Psa. 119:105-106). The Word of God is not to be trifled with. One is forbidden to “add to” or “take from” the Word of truth (Deu. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). As “newborn babes,” followers of Christ are to desire “the sincere milk of the word” so that spiritual growth will occur (1 Pet. 2:2). God imparts His truths to us in no other way than through the inspired Word. Each Christian is responsible to read, study, and store the Word of God in their mind.

In view of the importance of the Sacred Scriptures, let us now note several truths:

First, the Word of God must be **received**. Some on the Day of Pentecost “gladly received” God’s Word and “were baptized” (Acts 2:41—KJV). James declares the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. He then says, “putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). The Gospel or Word is clearly identified as “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The Master observed, “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28). It is true that “the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), but it must be genuinely received to be of benefit to man.

The parable of the sower shows that God’s Word does not always come into contact with a good and honest heart. The seed (God’s Word—Luke 8:11) that is sown sometimes falls by the wayside

and is trodden under the foot and devoured by birds (8:5). Some seed falls upon rocks and dies for lack of moisture (8:6). Other seed falls among thorns and is choked before it can mature (8:7). It is the **same seed** that is sown in every instance, but not every person is willing to allow the Word to take root and grow.

Second, the Word of God must be **held fast**. The apostle Paul, in instructing Titus in the qualifications of an elder, said a bishop must be “holding [fast—KJV] to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). It is sad that the majority of brethren today are more willing to **hold fast** to feelings, man-made whims, denominational concepts, and selfish motives than the precious Word of God! With such being true, it should come as no surprise that the verbiage of the gainsayers in many congregations has won out over sound doctrine.

Christians will be held accountable for not **holding fast** to God’s precious truths. The Christian who hopes to make Heaven his home must effectively and regularly use the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) in a way that glorifies God.

Third, God’s Word must be **held forth** as the Word of life. As long as brethren are ashamed of the glorious Gospel, the Lord’s work will never be accomplished, and the church will never shine forth as a beacon of light to those who are lost. The great commission still rings clear: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all

things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat. 28:19-20).

The early disciples confidently and eagerly **held forth** God’s glorious truths. “And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). As a result of the disciple’s steadfast faith and trust in God “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (6:7). Even those who “were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word” (8:4). If souls are to be saved today, the Word of life must be **held forth**.

Fourth, the Word of truth must be **rightly divided**. The apostle Paul admonished, “Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). One must rightly divide between the three great dispensations. One must rightly divide between God’s blessings reserved for His faithful followers and His wrath reserved for the disobedient (Rom. 11:22). One must rightly divide between the miraculous age of the early church and the church today since miracles have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

A failure to properly discern and rightly divide the Word of God will have one worshipping in error. God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Any person can choose to live righteously, but only by obeying the Word of God. May we always respect and stand in awe of the Holy Scriptures!

Reno, TX

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“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com>

Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



An Appeal to Reason

Cled E. Wallace

There are entirely too many disturbances in the churches of the Lord. One such congregation torn by strife is one too many, but inasmuch as even Christians are human and stumble in many things, a universal reign of peace is not to be expected even by the most optimistic. Such an ideal condition did not exist even in the days of the apostles. Paul carried a burden in his heart which he expressed in these words: "Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." Local troubles can become so numerous and bitter as to outrage all reason, not to mention the Holy Scriptures. In all such matters, the only appeal we have to make is to the teaching of the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament and to what little reason bitter contenders may have left after they have devoured one another in party strife. It usually turns out that when such carnally-minded brethren stop their ears to what the Holy Spirit says, an appeal to reason is about as effective as waiting verbal persuasion on a mad dog. In view of the internal strife that exists in some of

the churches, about the only influence they have left is the fact that they stand as a horrible example to other congregations of what strife can do to a church. The thoughtless and the vicious are exerting a baneful influence in many places on the cause of Christ. A church torn by strife is not a fit "habitation of God in the Spirit" and when God leaves one it becomes a synagogue of Satan. The Spirit of Jehovah can depart from a Christian or a church even as he departed from Saul. When the spirit of the devil comes in, the Spirit of God goes out.

Let our first appeal be to the Scriptures. The church is the body of Christ, the family of God, and includes all the children of God. A local congregation is the body of Christ in that locality. Paul addressed a letter to "the church of God which is at Corinth" and reminded them that "ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof." Further, "there should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another." A factious, unruly member insults the Lord and wounds His body. This is a

grievous sin that cannot be righteously condoned in any member of the body. The consequences of such conduct are tragic beyond words.

For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another (Gal. 5:13-15).

Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed (Jam. 3:13-16).

Unruly disturbers of the peace in a congregation of disciples are guilty of desecrating the temple of God and stand rebuked by the Holy Spirit in biting terms. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Pattern

The Hebrews' writer states the obligation of making the tabernacle: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). In Exodus 25, God gave to Moses very specific details for making the tabernacle. He was then admonished, "And look that thou make *them* after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (25:40). God, with this inferior Old Testament shadow, was concerned that everything made for that physical tabernacle was made to His exacting standards. After all the furnishings in the tabernacle were completed, it is stated, "Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he" (40:16).

The tabernacle and later the temple served as a *shadow* of the church and the dwelling place of God (heaven). The *shadow* is always inferior to the *reality*. Our Lord built or established the church. He promised to do so in Matthew 16:18 and it was fulfilled on Pentecost in Acts 2. We observe at that time the terms of entrance.

After Jesus' resurrection from the grave, He met with His apostles and told them that He possessed all power or authority both in heaven and in earth (Mat. 28:18). He then set forth the terms of entrance into the church as recorded in what we call the Great Commission (28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). As recorded in Matthew, to become a disciple (one who is a Christian; Acts 11:26) one must be baptized into a relationship with Deity and be taught all things Christ had commanded. In Mark's account, to be saved, one must believe and be baptized. Then, in Luke's account, we learn that repentance and remission of sins must be preached. When we look at Pentecost (Acts 2), we see these terms of entrance into the church are exactly what we have learned from Jesus. Peter, in his sermon, instilled belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God as evidenced by Old Testament prophecies and witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. Having been convicted of their sin of crucifying the Son of God, they cry out asking what they needed to do to be saved. Peter revealed to them (and us today) that they needed to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. This is exactly the terms of entrance Jesus established as recorded in the Great Commission: believe, repent, and be baptized to be saved (remission of sins) or to come into a relationship with God. Those who "gladly received his word were baptized" and were added (2:41). Luke reveals that they were added to the church (2:47) that Jesus built.

Jesus set forth the pattern of how we enter His church. The apostles on the day of Pentecost followed that pattern He estab-

lished with the result that those who accepted that pattern were added by God to His church—the only church that existed. However, through the years men did not continue to follow the pattern. Generally, men have desired to remove part of God's pattern. Some have removed almost the entire pattern to teach that we are saved by God's grace only. These seem to ignore Jesus' teaching recorded in Matthew 7:13-14.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Since God's grace that saved has appeared to all men (Tit. 2:11), then all men must be saved. Jesus teaches, however, that the majority of people will be lost. Thus, we know that we are not saved by God's grace alone.

Many others wish to put salvation at the point of faith. When one believes, then that one is saved, so this theory goes. These want to ignore that James teaches that the demons believe and tremble (Jam. 2:19). During the ministry of Jesus, we find John recording for us:

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43).

Jesus teaches that those who do not confess Him will be denied before the Father (Mat. 10:32-33). Thus, we have people that believe yet they will be denied before God unless they repent. Thus, we can learn that salvation does not come at the point of faith as these want to claim.

While often not teaching explicitly that one does not need to repent, several have taught through the years a doctrine which results in such. When the subject of divorce and remarriage arises, they teach one can remain in an adulterous *marriage* and simply be baptized and God will still forgive their sins and add them to the church. These give *lip service* to repentance, but if they actually believed in repentance, they would demand that

those committing adultery according to Jesus in Matthew 5:32; 19:9 would get out of their sin—those *adulterous marriages*.

Then there are those who are not satisfied with the pattern Jesus set for entering into the church, so they add to that established pattern. The Pentecostals of our day are notorious for adding to the pattern Jesus established. Because of their Pentecostal leanings, many will add miraculous activity to Jesus' pattern. They generally add the specific miraculous power of tongue-speaking (*glossolalia*). These do not deny the necessity of faith, repentance, and baptism salvation (the remission of sins), but they will then add miraculous activity. They refuse to acknowledge that miracles (including tongue-speaking) have ceased. We know such because there is no longer any purpose for miracles since we have the confirmed, completed revela-

tion of God's Word today. (The purpose of miracles was for revelation and confirmation.) There is no access to miracles today as there are no apostles to lay hands on people to impart such today. Additionally, God tells us when miracles would cease in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:7-16. They would cease when God's written revelation was completed. Since miracles have ended and did so during the first century, miracles are not a part of Jesus' pattern to save man.

Jesus having all authority and being head over the church set forth the pattern for being saved. No man or group of men has the right to change it (remove anything from it or add anything to it). If you desire to have the remission of your sins and the hope of heaven's home, you must obey Jesus' pattern for being saved.

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in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Obviously, many who think they are on the road to heaven, are badly turned around and have pointed their chariots in the wrong direction, under the delusion that down is up. In their present state of spiritual chaos, they might as well throw away their New Testaments, and call in a band like the one Cornwallis had at Yorktown which is reputed to have played "The World's Turned Upside Down." Of course, God would not accept it in His worship, but neither will He accept the song "O, how I love Je-

sus" from a liar.

The simple plan of congregational government is beautifully and peculiarly adapted "to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The members are children of God in the family of God. His law is revealed in the New Testament and it is assumed that they are diligent students seeking to do His will. The oversight of the congregation is divinely entrusted to elders, men who by reason of age and experience are better qualified than others to instruct and direct all who are anxious to please the Lord while they live and go to heaven when they die. The qualifications of such leaders are plainly stated in the divine handbook

which disciples are pledged to follow—the New Testament. These men are not sinless, for sinlessness does not belong to men, even elders, and when they make mistakes they should be exhorted as fathers by somebody qualified to do it, and not rebuked by mote-hunters and faultfinders.

Selfish, factious men who have unholy ends to serve often charge that elders are not qualified, and too often they have plausible grounds to base some criticisms, but their conclusions do not follow. The alternative they usually suggest is that the direction of the affairs of the church be determined by a majority vote of the congregation. The majority is less qualified than the

allegedly unqualified eldership. The obvious reason for the factionist's preference for the majority is that the number of thoughtless and uninformed is great enough that he can use it to serve his own plans for controlling the situation. Such a situation is so tragic that it well-nigh destroys the identity of the congregation as the body of Christ where it thus functions. Even if a qualified leadership stands in the way of the schemes of a factionist, the sun will cease to rise about the time he fails to make an effort to disqualify it on technical grounds. Majority rule is more to his liking, for he is adept at making and controlling majorities because of their very nature. He in fact and act impeaches the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in making elders shepherds of the flock. These things are said with full knowledge of the fact that some unholy and domineering men assume authority as elders of churches, seek to Lord it over the heritage of God and become modern mimics of Diotrefes. Leaders in the churches should not be self-willed but seek to teach and guide the disciples in doing the will of God. They are solicitous both of the welfare and the pleasure of those under their oversight. They should have a fatherly interest in all the members. They are within their rights and exercising their duties when they resist the efforts of a factionist muscle in and build up a majority by flattering speech and smooth ways to use for his own ends. A qualified leadership will always oppose such men and warn the church against them. The factionist is often supported by noisy partisans who shout charges of popery at the leaders. Their partisanship cancels out what little

love for the cause of Christ they ever had in their hearts. There is plenty of good sense in this inspired advice. It should commend itself to the reason of all who have any reason to be appealed to.

Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men: but shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned (Tit. 3:8-11).

Any number of members in a church who support and encourage a factionist are factionists themselves and stand condemned in the sight of God and all right-thinking people. They should be refused. A quarantine sign should be hung on them by all lovers of peace and order in the churches. They are afflicted with a deadly, communicable, carnal disease and should be avoided. Such treated is designed to shame them and bring them to their senses or leave them to their fate. The head of the church is the final avenger in all such matters.

Some twenty years ago my father did the preaching in a tent meeting, the first meeting that was ever held in a certain Texas town. A church was started and over time a good house was built on a well-located lot. Some two years ago a young preacher about twenty years of age or thereabouts breezed in and nominated himself as *minister* for that church. Older members, some of whom were there

when the church was started and when the young preacher was wearing diapers expressed opposition. He went in over protest by a majority vote, or something equivalent to it. It caused trouble. He had been an issue elsewhere. In fact, preachers and other brethren throughout that whole section of the country express themselves as being outraged over his conduct. They are older, more experienced men. They recognize that a congregation is independent and not subject to outside dictation. The young man *resigned*, whatever that is, a few months ago, announced that he was through *pastorating* and that he was going to show a lot of "bread and butter hirelings" how to evangelize. He did not stay gone long. His partisan supporters, many of them talkative women and novices in the faith, brought him back and voted him in over the protest of older, more experienced members. It created a combustible situation. About that time brother Austin Taylor and I were called for a meeting at that place. Neither of us knew the condition things were in when we left home. We found ourselves amid brethren tense with feelings of strife—all over a young preacher. Some were determined that he should not preach again. Others were as much determined that he should stay, and he agreed with them and did stay. Brother Taylor and I tried to show by our conduct and our Gospel work what Christianity is and how it helps people behave themselves in the church. Crowds were good despite bad weather, and we felt that we did some good. We assumed no dictatorial powers but tried to give some good advice that might help the cause. The young preacher re-

sisted all our efforts to persuade him to go to another field. He and most of his supporters seemed determined that he stay at all costs. Just before the last service was dismissed, an old brother about three times as old as the young preacher announced that another preacher would preach the following Sunday and the meeting was dismissed. The storm broke. Some excited, hysterical women gave some older men who had been with the church from the beginning, a tongue-lashing and denounced them as popes etc., etc., and demanded that they “resign” and get out of the way. Most of this happened after we left for the train and it is reported that the clamor and confusion continued for nearly an hour. The fight continued the following Wednesday evening with the young preacher, in his very

early twenties, in charge reading and making accusations and demanding resignations and all that sort of thing. Some left in disgust and it is reported that the preacher is in full charge. It seems that many who have been there for many years have left the congregation and are worshipping elsewhere.

I am reciting this sordid story for one purpose. It can serve as a warning to other churches to be on the alert against insidious influences which can wreck them and leave them in an unholy mess. Those of us who place a high value on soul-saving shudder at the number of people who will fail to reach heaven because of such upheavals with the hatreds they arouse. I feel sorry for them, all of them, and sorriest of all for the worst of them. I wonder in view of their silly conduct if it may be said

of them, “They know not what they do” in rending the body of Christ. I pity the young preacher, foolish and vain, who thinking he has won a victory, will probably find that he has badly damaged his influence for years to come, if not for all time to come. He will possibly soon be sending in glowing reports of the unity and progress of that church. In a church fuss all are to be pitied, whether right or wrong, if any can stay right in the middle of one. A church fuss is stark tragedy, especially when the issue is a silly, baby preacher, spoiled by foolish women and shallow men. It is so useless, since it is so easy and expedient for a preacher to move out. They reap the whirlwind who sow the wind. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

Deceased

Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 2)

Ken Chumbley

In the first article, we had a few words to say about one book I had received (unrequested) in the mail. I want to examine this book, *Ten Commandments Twice Removed*, some more. The first chapter of the book is titled, “Twice Removed.” The purpose of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for the remainder of the book. Much of what is stated here we would agree with regarding the attempts that have been and are being made to remove God and religion from government, schools, etc. In the course of this, they lay great emphasis on what has happened with respect to the removal of the “Ten Commandments” from public display. The authors’ basic thesis is that we need “moral law” restored in this nation. With that

we can agree. However, they insist that the **only** way to have moral law is to go back to the “Ten Commandment” Law. They note the rush of the many on the “religious right” who have spoken out against the removal of the “Ten Commandment” law but point out an inconsistency—that inconsistency being that although they claim to follow the “Ten Commandments,” they do not obey one of those commandments. The authors are correct in pointing out that inconsistency. They conclude, thus that the “Ten Commandment” law has been “twice removed”—hence the title of the chapter—from both government and the churches.

Having laid this groundwork, they proceed in the rest of the book

to make a case for the “Ten Commandments” being the **only** moral law that is available to us today. The second chapter, “To Keep or Not to Keep?” is an attempt to show that we can **only** go to the “Ten Commandment” law to reveal sin. They ask, “Can anyone know Christ without obeying His commandments?” Clearly the answer is, “No.” However, they then seek to prove that the law of Christ has to be the “Ten Commandment” law as that is, according to the authors, the **only** way to know what sin is—as if the New Testament does not tell us what sin is! Many passages could be given regarding this (such as Gal. 5:19-21), but we do not have space to list them all here. Then, having laid this out, the au-

thors continue by pointing out the fourth commandment of the ten—the Sabbath commandment. Their purpose clearly is to convince their readers that since they keep the other nine commandments (they recognize those to be the law of God for this age) they become “lawless” in that they violate the law by not keeping the Sabbath (Saturday). They then state regarding such, “Seems as though people in this camp choose to believe that the only commandment nailed to the cross was God’s holy Sabbath.” They go on to list what they call some *teasers* that are given “for those who think God’s seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath was canceled at the cross.”

Before we note the *teasers*, we will address the premise that the “Ten Commandment” law was not “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14). First, we turn to the context (something our authors have a habit of ignoring as per the matter of Acts 20:7). In Colossians 2:16-17, we read:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

Note that in most translations, *days* is italicized. There is a reason for that: *days* is not in the Greek text but is added by the translators to help in understanding the text.

Sadly, in this case, they have just “muddied the waters.” Sabbatarians will say that this reference is only to the special Sabbath days mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament and not the reference in the Fourth Commandment of the decalogue. However, since the Greek simply states “the sabbath,” Paul was clearly referencing the Sabbath day. Remember, Paul was writing to Christians, many of whom had come from a Gentile background and there were the Judaizing teachers who were seeking to bind the Old Covenant, including the “Ten Commandment” law on the Gentiles—a law that was **only** given to the Jews (Exo. 20:1-17; Deu. 5:1-21).

Sabbatarians argue that if the “Ten Commandment” law is “nailed to the cross,” then we do not have any moral law to follow. However, such would indicate that there was no moral law taught in the New Testament. It can be clearly shown (although space will not permit it here) that nine of the ten laws are repeated in the New Testament, only one—the Fourth—the Sabbath command—was omitted.

Let me illustrate the principle. Before the 13 colonies gained independence from Great Britain, they were all under British law. After they gained their independence, did they become *lawless*—that is “without law”? Clearly not, they

had their own laws: most of which were taken directly from British law. Things were illegal because they violated the U.S. laws—not because they violated British laws. Similarly, when the “Ten Commandment” law “was nailed to the cross” after the church was established, Christians were not *lawless* (without law) as those things that were binding on Christians were a part of the New Covenant. That is what made them binding—not because they had been in the Old Covenant.

I mentioned earlier the authors *teasers*. The first deals with Matthew 24, which they believe refers to the return of Christ. They refer to the flight of the people before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reference is actually to the fact that unbelieving Jews still keeping the Sabbath would have the gates closed on that day barring escape. The second one is from Matthew 5:18 and “not one jot or tittle” passing from the law until all is fulfilled. They take such to mean that the law will continue until the end of time. If that is what Jesus meant, He would not have said “till all be fulfilled” indicating that the law would not pass away until all was fulfilled. It passed away when Jesus said, “It is finished” on the cross. He had fulfilled the law—the only One who could.

More to come.

Deceased

Cursed or Blessed

Don Tarbet

When God blesses someone, it suggests His *approval* of that one. When He curses one, it suggests His *disapproval*. He is the only One

who can make final judgment of what will ultimately be the destiny of anyone. *Curse* when applied to man, is to “bring down a prayer”

upon one and to “judge” him, while only God can be the final judge (Jam. 4:11-12). Our ability to make final judgment is lacking in not

having all the evidence or authority to make final judgment. When God curses, He does not have to use strong, corrupt, or ugly language as men often do when they pronounce judgment on another. God just announces that one or something is wrong in His sight and doomed for destruction. He does not have to *bring down* a prayer which is suggested when man curses. Man's cursing is mostly the vain asking of God to condemn someone on man's limited knowledge, and usually without any intent of asking God to send another to hell but is a habitual use of strong condemnatory words to another, oftentimes in a time of anger or bitterness. This ought not to be done (3:9-10; Eph. 4:29).

Curse and *bless* (in their varied forms) are often found in the same verse or context of Scripture in the Bible. Some examples are: Genesis 12:3, 9:25-26, Matthew 5:44, and Romans 12:14. A very interesting contrast is found in Jeremiah 17:5-10, as the prophet speaks for God. Jeremiah states, "Cursed is the man" and "Blessed is the man." These statements do **not** describe the same man, but different men, when we compare what is said about both men.

The cursed man is one who trusts in man. He is like a warrior or soldier who depends on his own wisdom and strength, or the efforts of other men to win the battle or to accomplish any endeavor. He "makes flesh his strength" (17:5). This is because his "heart departs from the Lord" (17:5). Then Jeremiah says he is "**like** a shrub in the desert" (17:6). He will not have "good" results (17:6). He will be like a wanderer or vagabond as he

"inhabits" desolate places (17:6). We sing the song "Stand up for Jesus," which has the words "The arm of flesh will fail you; Ye dare not trust your own."

The blessed man is one who trusts in the Lord. This is true for various reasons. It begins because he knows the Lord and has "hope" in Him (17:7). He has a good foundation and purpose, as he is **like** a tree (rather than a shrub), planted in a good location, "by the waters" which can sustain him (17:8). The "tree" spreads out its roots to the river, and he is ready for the "heat" or "drought" that may come (17:8). The continued results will be good, as the tree's "leaf will be green," full of life and energy. He will never cease from bearing "fruit" (17:8). This is a good time to look at the same kind of comparison David makes of the *blessed* man and the *ungodly* man of Psalm 1:1-6.

The cursed man's "heart" had departed from the Lord. The blessed man trusted in the Lord, because his heart was right. Jeremiah goes on to write about the *heart* of man. He says it is "deceitful above all *things*," and is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), and no one can really "know it" (17:9). However, **God** searches the heart and tests the mind, and blesses man according to His ways and the "fruit of his [man's] doings" (17:10). If God's "ways" are followed by man's "doings," one will be blessed. The "doings" of man will not bring God's approval.

With this comparison in mind, let us look at the *cursed* and the *blessed* of our day. The blessed man is one who does **not** trust in men, but in God. Man does not have within himself the ability to direct his steps in a way to please God

(10:23). Man cannot please God in his own wisdom, but glories in the fact that he understands and knows God, which brings "delight" to the Lord (9:23-24). Solomon wrote, "Be not wise in your own eyes, Fear the Lord and depart from evil" (Pro. 3:7). Also, "He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed" (13:20).

Man's wisdom today will not bring one into the favor of God to enjoy salvation. It is the wisdom of man that advocates salvation by "faith only," apart from and without repentance and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Faith itself is the "work of God" because it is commanded of God (John 6:28-30). Baptism is **also** the "working of God" for He commands it (Col. 2:12). Neither does the "sinner's prayer," as advocated by so many in our time, bring salvation.

God's wisdom and power is in Christ and the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17-21; Mark 16:15-16). Paul said it is "**Not by** works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by** the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5—KJV). Notice that Paul says we are **not** saved by our works of righteousness (cf. Rom. 10:3), "**but by** "the washing," which is in baptism (Acts 22:16), when sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 1:5; 22:14—ASV).

Are you "cursed" or "blessed"? Christ became a curse for us that He might bless us with salvation (Gal. 3:13). He depends on those who are still under the curse of condemnation to "trust in the Lord," and put their "hope" in Him (Jer. 17:7).

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com>

Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



Constant Practice

Lester Kamp

“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**” (Phi. 4:9). William Hendricksen, in his commentary on Philippians, offers his translation of this verse: “The things which you not only learned and received but also heard and saw in me these things put into **constant practice**.” Kenneth S. Wuest, in his *Philippians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, offers this translation for the term: “habitually practice,” or “practice as a habit.”

The Context

Notice first that Paul’s instruction to *do, put into constant practice, to habitually practice*, is preceded by his instructions to “think on these things” (Phi. 4:8). It should be noted that behavior originates in thinking. “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro. 23:7). Scripture notes particularly how the thinking of several individuals influenced their actions. First, Elisha instructed Naaman, the leper, to “wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought”

(2 Kin. 5:10-11). His thinking on this occasion caused him to decide that his own ideas were superior to God’s instructions. His thoughts caused him to doubt God’s requirements. He “went away in a rage” according to verse 12 thinking that there was no benefit in doing what God, through Elisha, had commanded him to do. Consider the loss of blessings that this wrong thinking would have resulted in for Naaman. Wrong thinking always results in wrong behavior which causes one to miss the blessings that obedience to God provides. Because of the sage advice of his servants, Naaman thankfully changed his thinking, obeyed God, and was cleansed.

Recall also the rich farmer in Luke 12 that God calls a fool. Remember that his harvest had been so great that he had no place to store his crops. Jesus said of him, “And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do” (Luke 12:17-18). His thinking was that he had plenty of time later to think about spiritual matters; therefore, he determined to take it easy and enjoy his success without concern for his relationship with God. The

result was catastrophic: “But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (12:20). The one we call the prodigal son, after living in a rebellious way, finally “came to himself.” When he did, he thought about what he should do. His thoughts resulted in his actually going to his father and acknowledging to him that he had “sinned against heaven, and in thy sight” (15:21). But, notice again that before he returned home, he thought through what he should do and say. Behavior starts with thought! If we are to live a faithful Christian life, we must guard our thoughts and direct them toward those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. “Think [meditate] on these things” (Phi. 4:8), Paul said.

Christianity is Doing

The religion of Christ is not just of the mind; Christianity is doing. It is certainly essential that we believe the right things—the Truth (John 8:32)! One can be doctrinally sound, but wrong in practice. Con-

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

The Providence of God

Introduction

The concept of God's providence is a glorious concept to contemplate and yet one in which we will never in this life come to fully understand. Simply to think that the infinite God would condescend to interfere in the affairs of man to work things for man's good (and in particular those of Christians) is beyond man's comprehension. Paul so aptly put it: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). Yet, the knowledge of God's providence is a marvelous comfort and encouragement to every Christian. It encourages weak Christians to step out into the unknown. Knowledge of God's providence and that He will fight for us gives courage for the Christian to put to flight thousands of the enemies of God. The comfort afforded the Christian that God is with him will enable the Christian to lay down his life for his Master. It is, truly, an important study.

Some Definitions

God is. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The crowning point of that creation was the making of man in God's own image (1:26-27). Once God made man, He did not leave this world all alone. Instead, God had a continual interest in all that has gone on in this world. The view that God simply started things out and has no more concern in this world is deism. Wilbur Tillet in *ISBE* gives an excellent definition of *deism* when it writes:

Deism teaches that there is a God, and that He created the world, but created things do not need His presence and the exercise of His power in order to continue in existence and fulfill their functions. The material world is placed under immutable law; while man, the rational and moral free agent, is left to do as he wills. God sustains, according to deism, very much the same relation to the universe that the clock-maker does to his time-piece. Having made his clock, and wound it up, he does not interfere with it, and the longer it can run without the maker's intervention the greater the evidence of wisdom and skill on the part of the maker. God according to deism has never wrought a miracle nor made a supernatural revelation to man. The only religion that is possible to man is natural religion; he may reason from Nature up to Nature's God. The only value of prayer is its subjective influence; it helps us to answer our own prayers, to become and be what we are praying to be. If the Divine Being is a prayer-hearing God, He is least not a prayer-answering God. The laws of Nature constitute God's general providence; but there is no other personal and special providence than this, accord-

ing to deism. God, the deists affirm, is too great, too distant, too transcendent a Being to concern Himself with the details of creaturely existence (4:2481).

While it is my conviction that there is practically no deist in the church today, there are some who sound very much like a deist when they speak. However, deism is false to the core. God did not simply wind up this world with the laws of Nature and leave it to itself.

God works in the affairs of man. He has always done so, and He does so today. Thus, we are faced with the question of **how** God works in the affairs of man. This falls under two categories: miracles and providence. (Although providence is not used in the Bible regarding God, the term aptly describes what God does for man.) A miracle is defined by Arndt and Gingrich as:

2. *a sign* consisting of a *wonder* or *miracle*, an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature. **a. miracle** of divine origin, performed by God himself, by Christ, or by men of God.

Brother Tom Bright wrote, "Thus, an acceptable definition of 'miracle' is an observable event or happening which has set aside, i.e., overruled, the laws of nature. It was an event inexplicable by any of the laws of nature" (272). A

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Bible miracle is the transcendence, setting aside, overruling or interference of the processes of nature, for the moment, by a Force superior to nature, a supernatural power—God. (Please see my editorials in *Defender*, October and November 1995.) However, some use *miracle* in a very loose way where almost anything is interpreted as a miracle. These will use such trivial events as an outstanding action in sports as a miracle. Others will use a marvel of science or some wonderful event which is out of the ordinary as a miracle. Many will speak of the “miracle of birth,” or some even talk of the “miracle of nature.” These are not miracles in the Biblical definition. (Christians need to be very careful in our use of *miracle* to make sure we use it as God uses the term and not in the common usage we often hear today—1 Pet. 4:11.) While accepting every miracle recorded for us in the Biblical text, we also recognize that the Bible teaches that miracles ceased upon the completion of the New Testament text. (Please see my chapter, “Miraculous Divine Healing Today Error” in MSOP Lectureship book from 1999, *God Hath Spoken, Affirming Truth and Reproving Error*, pages 447-490.)

On the other hand, providence, in its basic form, “has reference to that preservation care and government which God exercises over all things that He has created in order they may accomplish the ends for which they were created” (Tillet 4:2476). Wood and Marshall in the *New Bible Dictionary* states:

Providence is normally defined in

Christian theology as the unceasing activity of the Creator whereby, in overflowing bounty and goodwill (Ps. 145:9 Mt. 5:45-48), he upholds his creatures in ordered existence (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), guides and governs all events, circumstances and free acts of angels and men (*cf.* Ps. 107; Jb. 1:12; 2:6; Gn. 45:5-8), and directs everything to its appointed goal, for his own glory (*cf.* Eph. 1:9-12). This view of God’s relation to the world must be distinguished from: (a) *pantheism*, which absorbs the world into God; (b) *deism*, which cuts it off from him; (c) *dualism*, which divides control of it between God and another power; (d) *indeterminism*, which holds that it is under no control at all; (e) *determinism*, which posits a control of a kind that destroys man’s moral responsibility; (f) the doctrine of *chance*, which denies the controlling power to be rational; and (g) the doctrine of *fate*, which denies it to be benevolent. Providence is presented in Scripture as a function of divine sovereignty. God is King over all, doing just what he wills (Pss. 103:19; 135:6; Dn. 4:35; *cf.* Eph. 1:11). This conviction, robustly held, pervades the whole Bible (979).

In *providence*, we are discussing the working of God through the laws of nature to accomplish His purposes. Brother Garland Elkins wrote:

God, as He always has, rules in the affairs of men, but he [sic] does this within the confines of natural law and not by miracle. Unfortunately many sincere people labor under a serious misunderstanding of the words “*providence*” and “*miracle*,” as if God is limited to the miraculous in His providential working among men. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In both miracles and providence, God is working. The difference is that in miracles God set aside natural law, while providence is God’s working through, by means of, or utilizing natural law. In providence, God is manipulating the laws of nature to accomplish His divine purpose. Brother Wayne Jackson pointed out the distinction by writing:

A miracle is God’s working on a plain that is above that of natural law; providence is his [sic] utilization of natural law. In a miracle, the Lord works *directly*; in providence, he [sic] operates *indirectly*, employing *means* to accomplish the end (86).

There are two aspects of providence which we need to touch upon: general providence and special providence. General providence deals with God’s care over the physical world. In this God is working through or using the Laws of Nature in an ordinary way to care for His creation, including man. Jesus’ statement in the Sermon on the Mount concerning the Father and His nature is a beautiful statement of general providence: “For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat. 5:45). God using nature for the care of man in general (whether righteous or not). Special providence is God’s exercising control over natural events in answer to the prayers of saints and for the benefit of His children. Let us consider some illustrations (primarily dealing with special providence in comparison with miracles) of these basic principles.

(More to come in future issues)

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Continued from Page 1

consider the scribes and Pharisees of whom Jesus said, “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Mat. 23:3). Jesus referred to them as hypocrites because of their knowing what was right without doing what was right. There is an obvious emphasis on doing in the New Testament. It would be impossible here to even list all the passages with this emphasis because of space, but we should notice a few. When Jesus described the judgment, He spoke of those who acknowledged Him as Lord, but failed to do the Will of God (7:21). Later, in that same sermon, He spoke of wisdom as not only hearing the Word, but also of doing what the Word teaches (7:24-25). Paul spoke of those who are saved by grace through (the) faith as those “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). James tells us to “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jam. 1:22). Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Constant, Habitual Practice

There is to be a constancy and consistency in our doing! Far too many Christians today are vacillating between faithful and unfaithful service, between being active and AWOL soldiers, between being regular and sporadic worshipers, be-

Study Aids

The Bellview website is a great resource for Bible study material. The website address is bellviewcoc.com). In addition to all issues of

tween fervent and apathetic commitment, between being hot and cold followers, and between being dedicated and indifferent disciples of Christ. Being accepted of God surely requires **constant, habitual practice** of those things that are taught in the New Testament. Christianity is not obeying only when it is convenient! Obeying only when it fits into our schedule! Obeying only when it does not interfere with what we deem to be the pleasures of life (2 Tim. 3:4)! One of the first things that inspiration tells us about the first Christians was that “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). There is a persistence and consistence inherent in “continued steadfastly.” Some translations render this idea by the phrase “continually devoted themselves.” Some brethren are grossly lacking in this concept. Their practice of the faith once for all delivered is hardly **constant or habitual**. When even attendance at worship is considered, there is rarely a service, if any, when all the members of any given congregation who are able to attend are actually present. Sporting events, relaxation, leisure, and other activities of various kinds are preferred by some rather than the worship of God; yet most of these, even if absent from the assemblies of the church most of the time, consider themselves to be faithful Christians! Absurd!

Defender, there are also all issues of our bulletin, *Beacon*. Then there are a couple of decades of sermon outlines and videos with more being added regularly.

There is another site that has numerous videos that can be of aid.

There is to be a **pattern** of obedience to God for the Christian which is both **constant** and **habitual**. We are to “yield your [our] members servants to righteousness unto holiness” rather than yielding ourselves to “uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity” (Rom. 6:19). Of whom are we servants in reality? Paul tells us, “his servants ye are to whom ye obey” (6:16). The life of a servant is constant, habitual obedience to his master. Jesus warned us that we cannot serve two masters (Mat. 6:24). Some think they can. Some try. But the truth is that when we try to do this, we are not servants of God (12:30).

Example

Lastly, Paul was able to commend his own example to the brethren for them to follow. He realized that we need to “practice what we preach.” The Philippians had “learned, and received, and heard” many things from Paul, but they had also “seen” them in Paul. These were the things that they were to do, to constantly and habitually practice. What a great lesson! Lessons that are seen are quite powerful (5:16). Paul was able to say, “Do as I do as well as what I say.” Many sermons and lessons are negated by the behavior of the preacher or teacher. How sad!

Live the life! Others are observing what you are doing. Be **constant** and **habitual** in your **practice** of the Words of Christ.

Aurora, CO

That is my YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/MichaelHatcher). There are numerous sermons, lectureships, various classes, and debates. I hope all will use these sites to help in your study of God’s precious Word.

Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 3)

Ken Chumbley

In part two, we examined two of the authors' *teasers*. We will now briefly, note the other two. First, they refer to Isaiah 66:22-23, claiming that these verses show that the redeemed will be keeping the weekly Sabbath in heaven. However, the verses do not mention the Sabbath observance but simply uses the expression in the sense of the passing of time "from one sabbath to another"—just as the expression "from one new moon to another" is used in the same context. It is not speaking of observing each sabbath or new moon but is a figurative way of referring to worshipping from day to day. The authors need to prove that "For all of eternity, God's redeemed people will gather every seventh-day Sabbath to have a time of special worship and fellowship with our Creator God" is not found in the text.

Their final *teaser* refers to the fourth commandment (Exo. 20:8) and then asks: "Why is the fourth commandment the only one of the Ten Commandments that starts with the word 'Remember'?" Who was commanded to remember the Sabbath? The children of Israel and no other (20:1-2; Deu. 5:1-3). Further, what were the Israelites to "remember"? They were to remember that they had been servants in Egypt and the Lord had brought them out to freedom (5:14-15). Following this, the authors go on to show the inconsistency of many denominational groups in maintaining that the Ten Commandments are still in force today, but they have transferred the Sabbath

from the seventh day of the week to the first. We agree that there is indeed an inconsistency on the part of many in this regard. However, that does **not** prove that Christians should be worshipping on the seventh day, the Sabbath.

The next two chapters, three and four, are titled "Two Laws, Two Covenants Unraveled" (parts 1 and 2). The "Two Laws" that the authors refer to are the Law of God and the Law of Moses—a distinction that they proceed to draw in these chapters. They seek to prove that the Ten Commandment Law is one law—the Law of God, and that all of the other laws that God gave were nothing more than the "Law of Moses." Does the Bible draw such a distinction or have the authors devised a distinction that is not found within the Word of God? Their purpose is to have the Law of Moses taken out of the way but the Ten Commandment Law to still be in force. Is that what the apostle Paul taught? Let us notice a few passages of Scripture.

Paul wrote:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then?

Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet (Rom. 7:4-7).

Paul teaches we are "dead to the law." What law is that? He explains that which contained the law, "thou shalt not covet." Where is that law found? It is found in the Ten Commandment law (Exo. 20:17; Deu. 5:21). Paul says we are dead to that law. If we are dead to a law, it is no longer binding on us.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is discussing the law. Note what he writes:

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.... But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away (2 Cor. 3:3, 7).

What law was written in "tables of stone"—the Ten Commandment law? What was to be done away? Clearly it involved the Ten Commandments. In a previous article, we had taken note of Colossians 2:14 where Paul teaches that the Sabbath was a part of that which was taken away. These three passages clearly show that part of that to which we are dead, that from which glory was done away, and that which was taken away was indeed the Ten Commandment law.

As previously noted, the authors

of the book spend a great deal of time seeking to draw a distinction between the Law of Moses and the Law of God (the Ten Commandments). However, Nehemiah shows that such is merely a figment of their imagination. In Nehemiah 8 and 9 we find the reading of the law that took place following the return of some of the children of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. The people are assembled together, and the law is read to them. Nehemiah 8:1 reads:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

The book that was brought to be read was the “book of the law of Moses.” Then Nehemiah 8:18 states:

Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the

eight day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

Thus, we see that in verse one it is referred to as the “book of the law of Moses” and in verse eighteen it is referred to as the “book of the law of God.” Clearly, we find two ways of referring to the same book as the same law. Hence, any effort to make the two different is without Scriptural warrant.

More to come.

Deceased

Our Attitude Toward the Truth

J. Roy Vaughan

In all the long history of man, there has never been a charge given to mortal man more sacred and more far-reaching in its consequences than the commission the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples on a mountain in Galilee after His resurrection. In this charge, Jesus commanded His disciples to

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Mat. 28:19-20).

Christ had a message to mankind, and He sent His disciples to teach all the nations. It was a fearful responsibility placed upon the apostles. However, not all the responsibility rested upon them; for while it was their solemn duty to faithfully preach the Gospel of Christ to the nations, it was also the responsibility of those who heard

to believe it and obey it. Likewise, it is our responsibility today. Our reception of the truth depends much upon the attitude we assume toward the truth.

Jesus said: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The Lord was not talking about truth as pertains to medicine, politics, music, law, or any other human branch of education, but He was talking about the truth as pertaining to the salvation of the soul of man. This truth exists today. It is to be had. It is accessible to all. It is much to be desired, and it will make us free when we receive it and obey it. But not all men will receive the truth. The Lord, in the parable of the sower, tells us why some men will not. He said:

The seed is the word of God. And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock *are* they who,

when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:11-15).

In this parable, Jesus teaches that the harvest depends upon the attitude of the hearer toward the truth; that the fault lies not with the seed, which is the truth, but with the hearer. The truth will make us free only when we open our hearts to receive it and abide in it. A man may be sick unto death. He may call a doctor, the best to be had, and the doctor may prescribe for his illness. The druggist may fill the prescription, and the medicine may be

brought to the bedside of the sick man; however, if he refuses to accept it and follow the doctor's orders, it will never be the means of his recovery. Likewise, we may have one of the finest copies of the Bible in our homes, and we may listen with pleasure as the truth is preached, but unless we receive it into our hearts and practice it in our lives, it will never make us free from sin and death.

A fine example of the right attitude toward the truth is found in Paul's statement concerning the people of Berea. He said: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Luke also tells us that the eloquent Apollos was willing to be accurately instructed in the way of the Lord. Why cannot people today show the same disposition toward the truth? Why will they not impartially compare what they hear with the Scriptures?

Remember, the Lord charged His disciples to go teach the truth, and it belongs to every Gospel preacher today to faithfully preach the Word, but there is also a grave responsibility that belongs to those who hear. God will judge us according to how we receive the truth. That man can understand the truth is implied in the command to go teach the truth to all nations. Why command the truth to be taught to the nations if men cannot understand it and obey it? If our hearts are honest and good, if we truly love the Lord and His

Word, if we are sincere about this business of going to heaven, we will search the Scriptures daily and receive the truth into our hearts and lives; for then, and only then, will it make us free.

Another thing that greatly hinders the truth today is what C. C. Crawford calls "pious bits of profanity"—such remarks as we often hear, as: "There is nothing in a name," or "One church is as good as another," or "We cannot have unity among Christians, because God never intended for us to see alike," or "I know that is what the Bible says, but I am satisfied." Another says: "My mother's religion is good enough for me." To a great many people these stupid sayings are the law and the gospel. They attempt by them to satisfy their dull consciences, simply because they are afraid to honestly investigate the truth or are indifferent toward the truth. They do not want the truth. They want to do as they please, and they use these statements to justify themselves in the eyes of men.

Let us take an honest look at these simple statements. Is it true that there is nothing in a name? Meet that man who teaches that there is nothing in a name and tell him to his face that in your judgment you do not believe he is a Christian, but that you believe he is a hypocrite, and see if he believes there is anything in a name. Will he like it? Certainly not. And why? Simply because there is something in the name *Christian* and the name *hypocrite*. But what does the Bible teach about the matter? Peter said: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any

other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (4:12). Next, is it true that one church is as good as another? The Scriptures do not justify such a statement. One denomination may be as good as another, but the church that Jesus built is not a denomination. The Bible recognizes one, and only one, church. It never recognizes a denomination. Jesus said: "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18). The church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18), and Paul taught there is but one body (1 Cor. 12:20). The church is the kingdom of God, and there is but one kingdom of God. The church is the family of God, and there is but one family of God. Therefore, it is not true that one church is as good as another.

Well, is it true that Christians cannot be one? Paul said: Let "there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10). Is a man right and safe simply because he is satisfied? Should we not rather want to satisfy the Lord? No man is acceptable before God who has not satisfied the law of the Lord. Furthermore, does not the man who thinks his mother's religion is good enough for him, follow his mother rather than the Lord Jesus? Does not he place his mother's word above the Word of God? Men should not allow their opinions and their preconceived ideas to prevent them from obeying the truth. In the judgment, there will be only two classes—those who have and those who have not obeyed the truth.

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Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com



A Review of “Quarantined Worship”

John Chowning

General observations: After carefully viewing the video two times and taking over five pages of notes, I had the following general impression: Logically speaking, this was not brother Blackwell’s finest moment [*Brother Blackwell is an elder and preacher at Southaven Church of Christ in Southaven MS—editor*]. (1) There are numerous false dilemmas (“you either have this extreme viewpoint or agree with me” approach); these really are straw men. (2) His kind, yet intentional, use of an ad hominem attack on those who disagree with him at the end of his first reason (i.e. “you are Pharisaical” if you disagree with me) is most disheartening. (3) The “bait and switch” tactic used in his fourth reason is quite disappointing. Each of these is a telling indicator of a weak position.

Specific observations: In making responses to each section of the video, I have noted the time stamp on the video to which my remarks are addressed.

“What the Bible commands” (0:00-5:02)

According to brother Blackwell, the Bible commands Christians to come together (4:01). Four passages

are cited—Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, and 20. The slide for 1 Corinthians 11:18 includes the phrase “as a church” but is not read by brother Blackwell. The slide for 1 Corinthians 11:20 includes *in one place* but is not read by brother Blackwell. This leads him to the conclusion: “We believe that Christians should come together on the first day of the week” (4:39). This is a subtle, yet critical, subtraction from God’s Word. It is loosing the *in one place* that God clearly has bound (cf. 11:18, 20; 14:19, 23). What the Scriptures actually teach is that Christians should come together in one place on the first day of the week. The fact that the Southaven congregation has a meeting place demonstrates that they have in previous days understood that brethren had to assemble in one place to be pleasing to God. To fail to declare the whole counsel of God is serious (Acts 20:26-27).

He goes on to assert that to fail to come together in one place after the pandemic has passed would be the wrong thing to do. My Question: Why? (Whatever the Scriptures authorize after the pandemic has passed will be the same thing

they authorized during the pandemic.) Furthermore, it is wise to carefully note that when the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, there was a “present distress” (1 Cor. 7:26). It was of such severity that Paul counseled the brethren to refrain from entering into marriage when possible (7:25-28). He did not, however, offer any counsel about engaging in *quarantined worship* because of this distressing situation (note that 1 Cor. 11-16 are addressed to matters concerning the public worship). Such silence by Paul speaks volumes!

“Principle One: Love and Concern for Others” (5:03-13:15)

Brother Blackwell’s contention is quarantined worship—worship done in the home with an online video stream—is the right thing to do because it is an expression of love and concern for others. “Rearranging the worship” is in keeping with Christian principles, he argues. After an extended consideration of three New Testament passages of conflicts Jesus had with the Pharisees on the Sabbath day, brother Blackwell concludes that to assem-

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

The Providence of God

(This is continued from the
March 2020 issue of *Defender*.)

MIRACLES AND PROVIDENCE

We have previously noted God's providential care of all in making the sun to shine and causing the rain. On one occasion when Jesus and His apostles are crossing the Sea of Galilee there was a great storm which arose. Jesus was asleep in the stern, yet the apostles were in great fear from the storm. They come and awake Him and ask: "Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:38-39). On this occasion, Jesus used a miracle to control the elements (the weather). Yet, at other times God controlled the elements without using a miracle in response to prayer. During the days of Elijah, God caused it not to rain (1 Kin. 17), and James reveals that it was in response to Elijah's prayer (Jam. 5:17-18). After three and a half years of drought Elijah prayed again (after his contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel). While still on Mount

Carmel, Elijah prayed for God to send the rain. Elijah sends his servant to look toward the sea. After repeating this several times notice progression to the coming of the rain:

And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel (1 Kin. 18:44-45).

This is the same way rain comes to anyone today. It was totally according to the laws of nature. However, God intervened in nature to use those laws at the time in which He saw fit and for the benefit of His faithful. James tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions to show that what he prayed for and God answered, we can also. It was the providence of God working in the days of Elijah and it can work the same way today for His saints.

Christ, while on earth, miraculously healed many individuals. The types of healings were varied. Peter describes His life for us when he states that Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). His power was such that He was even able to raise the dead (John 11). At an earlier date, King Hezekiah of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was told to prepare for death. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kin. 20:1). Upon

hearing this, Hezekiah prayed saying, "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore" (20:3). Isaiah is sent back in to Hezekiah with the words:

Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake (20:5-6).

It is obvious that God is going to heal Hezekiah of his sickness. The question is how does He heal Hezekiah? "And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered" (20:7). God healed him, but it was not a miraculous healing, God used the natural means—the use of medicine (taking a lump of figs and laying it on the boil). Thus, we see God's providence in healing someone based upon the prayer of a righteous man.

Jesus' incarnation into this world was miraculous. Mary while still a virgin became pregnant. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 1:18). Luke gives a little more detail in writing:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.... Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:30, 34-35).

The virgin conception was truly a miracle, a sign, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. There was another woman who desired a man child, Hannah. She went into the temple and prayed to the Father asking Him to give her a man child.

Special notice:

When the world shut down because of COVID-19 it was decided to suspend printing *Defender* till things calmed down. Since several of our members gather together to put tabs on the publication for mailing and then having to take it to the post office, it was decided to suspend publication to help keep social distancing. As things return to somewhat normalcy, we are going to return to publication at this time. I am going to skip the volume numbers that were missed (volumes 4-6) and pick up with this one: number 7. It is our prayer that *Defender* will continue to be of benefit to you and that it will help all of us attain heaven’s home.

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head (1 Sam. 1:10-11).

When Elkanah and Hannah returned home the Record states, Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord (1:19-20).

Through the laws God instituted regarding procreation, Hannah had a son (Samuel). Yet, Samuel came as a direct result of Hannah’s prayer to God and God answering that prayer. However, it was not a miraculous conception (as was our Lord’s) but it was through His providential workings.

God in His infinite wisdom established governmental authority for the good of man (Rom. 13:1-7). On one occasion, God delivered a government by means of a great devastating miracle. The Assyrian

army under the leadership of Sennacherib came to Judah and took all the defended cities (Isa. 36:1). The Assyrian army then encamped against Jerusalem with a blasphemous message for them to surrender. Hezekiah, upon receiving the message, sought deliverance by the hand of God. Isaiah informs him that God would take care of the matter. In one night, God smote 185,000 Assyrian soldiers delivering Jerusalem from Sennacherib’s hand by a great miracle. We also see God’s providence worked out in this same situation. Isaiah informed Hezekiah that Sennacherib “shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land” (37:7). The chapter ends by saying, “And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead” (37:38). God was carrying out His plan, but He did so through natural means and without direct intervention on His part (through His divine providence).

To be continued
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Continued from Page 1
ble together in a public place for worship during the present distress is to fall into the same trap as the Pharisees (13:15).

The trap the Pharisees fell into was created by their failure to understand the fundamental purpose of the Sabbath—it was a day of rest (Exo. 20:8-11; Deu. 5:12-15). In the

800 years before the inception of the synagogue, it was only a day of physical rest and refreshment. When the synagogue was introduced, it became a day of spiritual refreshment also. By adding to and loosing from God’s Word, the Pharisees had lost sight of the original intent of the Sabbath and thus condemned Jesus as a sinner when He

healed on the Sabbath—something in complete harmony with its original intention.

Acts 20:7 declares that the original intention of the Lord's Day (the day of Jesus' resurrection, having conquered death and Hades—Rev. 1:18) was to break the bread (i.e., remember the Lord's death). He died as the sinless Lamb of God (our Passover) and shed His atoning blood to inaugurate God's universal, new covenant. This assembly was to be upon the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2). Any consideration of the Lord's Day which negates God's original intent and eclipses obedience to the first and great Commandment (Mat. 22:37-38) is to fall into the trap of the Pharisees. It is brother Blackwell who has fallen into the same trap as the Pharisees.

Two weighty questions arise about "virtual worship":

(1) Is "virtual worship"—admitted by all to be a substitute for the authorized assembled worship—acceptable to God?

(2) Where is the New Testament direct statement, example, and/or implication which authorizes "virtual worship"? (Note: a Biblical case for "virtual worship" using direct statement, example, and/or implication was not made in "Quarantined Worship."—*Editor's note: I have yet to see any attempt to make such a case by anyone advocating such.*)

If sufficient Bible answers cannot be supplied to these two questions, then to engage in "virtual worship" is to fall into the same trap as the Pharisees—you are binding and loosing where God has not.

"Principle Two: The Old Testament Principle of Quarantine" (13:16-14:36)

Since brother Blackwell

(rightly) did not contend that leprosy and the quarantining of lepers brought about the cancellation or relocation of synagogue or temple services, this section actually gives greater weight against his case, not for it. In a court of law, this section would be considered a "hostile witness."

"Consistency" (14:37-19:22)

He begins this section with Acts 8:1. What he apparently misses from Acts 8 is that when the brethren scattered into Judaea and Samaria, they were no longer members of the Jerusalem congregation. Because they went everywhere preaching the Word (the seed of the kingdom—Luke 8:11), they strengthened the local congregation, if there was a congregation already in the area where they moved. If there was no congregation, they started a new congregation. James 1:1 and 1 Peter 1:1 indicate that many of those who were scattered because of the persecution never returned to Jerusalem. Acts 8:5ff details one example of such with its record of Philip.

In the face of the persecution in Jerusalem, did the apostles who remained (8:1) stop assembling for worship, or did they continue obeying God? The overwhelming evidence in Acts and secular history (i.e., 11 of the 12 apostles died of unnatural causes) indicates they continued obeying God. Thus, they continued assembling together for public worship. Here are two great questions: (1) Why is the apostles' example in Acts 8:1-4 during persecution not authoritative during a pandemic? (2) What makes this New Testament account of action not binding? Acts 8:1-4 gives

greater weight against brother Blackwell's case, not for it. Another hostile witness.

He calls upon Acts 28:30 and Paul being under house arrest. Question: Was the apostle Paul, while under house arrest, able to worship God acceptably without online streaming? If so, why not take the infallibly safe course and follow Paul's example (as commended in 2 Tim. 3:10-11)?

"Autonomy" (19:22-24:52)

I am troubled by brother Blackwell's use of "We have never believed that" (21:50). It is no adequate substitute for "It is written." By my count, brother Blackwell refers to "canceling services" nine times between 21:15 and 23:56. Then he uses a "bait and switch" tactic when he says, "We have not canceled services, we have merely relocated them" (23:39). King Jeroboam decided, among other things, to *relocate* the worship of God from Jerusalem to Dan and Beersheba (1 Kin. 12). For Brother Blackwell's argument to be accurate, he must contend that Jeroboam did not have adequate authority and autonomy to change the location of worship with God's approval, but elders do.

"Civil Obedience" (24:53-26:58)

This has one of the strangest contentions I have ever heard. According to our beloved brother, Acts 5:29 does not apply when a civil government asks us to stop assembling, it only applies when it forbids us to do so. As long as the civil government asks us, we must obey! Apparently, civil obedience/disobedience is all determined by syntax and semantics.

Cookeville TN

Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 4)

Ken Chumbley

In part 3, we answered the authors' claims regarding their last two teasers and we noted that they also, correctly point out the inconsistency of many denominational groups who—while maintaining that the Ten Commandment Law is still in force today—have transferred the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first. However, as we pointed out, this does not prove that Christians should be worshipping on the seventh day—the Sabbath. We also showed from Scripture that the thesis of chapters three and four (that there were two laws—the Law of God and the Law of Moses) does not agree with the Bible. We showed where the terms are used interchangeably and where the teaching of the New Testament clearly shows that the Ten Commandment Law was indeed a part of that which was “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

Following this, the authors go on to show the inconsistency of many denominational groups in maintaining that the Ten Commandments are still in force today—but they have transferred the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first. We agree that there is indeed an inconsistency on the part of many in this regard. However, that does not prove that Christians should be worshipping on the seventh day, the Sabbath.

Chapter Five is titled, “Before Mt. Sinai—After The Resurrection.” Their purpose in this chapter is to show that items in the Ten Commandment Law of a moral nature

existed and were in force before Sinai and, similarly, that after the resurrection of Christ the same moral laws were in effect. That moral law existed before Sinai and after our Lord's resurrection does not, in and of itself, prove that the Ten Commandment Law was in effect prior to Sinai or after Christ's resurrection. Try as they might, the authors cannot get around the statements that are made in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5: “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:1-3), and “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deu. 5:2-3). Surely God and Moses knew what they were saying, and words mean something! There was a difference between what was then being enunciated as the Law and what had been in force previously—if not, the words are meaningless.

It is an old illustration, but nevertheless a good one: The day that the United States became independent it was no longer under the laws of Great Britain, but it was not without law. The states that formed the Union had its own laws. Most of—if not all of—the laws were the same as, or based on, those in Great Britain but they were a part of a different body of law. Similarly, following the death of Christ when the Old Testament Law had been

nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14), Christians were not without law—they had the Law of Christ.

One significant difference is that before Sinai and after the resurrection, the Sabbath Law was not in effect. It had not been commanded to other peoples. It had not been commanded to the children of Israel until after they were out of Egyptian bondage, and it is not bound upon Christians. Nine of the commandments, those of a moral nature are found as part of the Law of Christ in the New Testament. One, significantly, is not found—the fourth commandment of the Ten: the Sabbath commandment.

The authors of the book state:

As we will soon study, not one single Scripture in the Bible indicates that God transferred the sanctity of His seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath to the first day of the week. In contrast to a popular teaching, we will let the New Testament prove that none of the early Christians observed Sunday as the weekly day of worship.

We will have to wait until the next installment to see if the authors prove their case from the New Testament that “none of the early Christians observed Sunday as the weekly day of worship.” However, we would like to note that while we agree with their first statement—for God did not change the Sabbath to the first day of the week—such does not prove that Christians participated in Christian worship on the Sabbath. Neither does the fact that the Sabbath was not changed prove that the first day

of the week—Sunday—is not the day upon which Christians participated in Christian worship.

The authors state:

The New Testament records a number of disputes between Christian converts of Jewish heritage and those who came from the Gentile heritage. Some within the fellowship were identified as “Judaizers,” those who were keen on insisting the ceremonial laws of Moses be maintained.

They continue:

Great disputes broke out between these Judaizers and the new believ-

ers over days observed for “fasting,” whether Gentiles should be circumcised, whether the annual sabbath days should be celebrated, and more.

No Scripture is offered to back up their claim that it was just the “ceremonial laws.” Acts 15 tells of Paul and Barnabas going to Jerusalem because of these Judaizing teachers. The passage speaks of the “law of Moses.” We showed in part 3 that the “law of Moses” and the “law of God” were used interchangeably (Neh. 8). Thus, Acts 15 deals with the whole law. All that

was bound on the Gentiles was “that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood” (15:20). The authors then seek to conclude that there was no dispute over the seventh-day Sabbath because, “They all worshipped on God’s holy Sabbath day, and none questioned that it was the seventh day of the week (Saturday).” Next installment we will see if such a statement can be justified from the Scriptures.

Deceased

What Think Ye?

Lester Kamp

Several times the question above is posed in the Scriptures. The question is posed for those present to consider some important facts. We should understand that God wants us to think, to reason, to use our minds, and to consider the facts. The religion of Christ does not require of us *blind faith*, faith that is not rational because of the absence of facts. Being a Christian is not going by feelings and emotions alone. To become a Christian and to remain faithful to the Lord requires us to know—let me repeat—**to know** certain facts and to act upon them. Jesus said, “And ye **shall know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The apostle John later wrote, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).

Everything that interferes

with clear thinking must be shunned (1 Cor. 6:12). Traditions, feelings, emotions, the praise of men, the “wisdom” of men, and religious dogma tend to cloud our thinking. God has given us sufficient intelligence to “search the Scriptures” (Acts 17:11) to enable us to discern the difference between the Truth of God and the doctrines of men (Mat. 15:9). You need to use your mind which God has given you. Your eternal destiny depends on your knowing and obeying the Truth. Your salvation is too important to rely upon what others have said, or upon what other men have written in manuals, disciplines, and catechisms.

Clearly, salvation is based on knowing the Truth. God has given us the evidence to consider. Active belief (faith) is to result from the acceptance of that evidence. The evidence is presented in God’s inspired Word. Jesus said, “Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). Ultimately,

we will be judged by that Word (12:48).

I want to challenge you to search the Scriptures and to think. Forget about what you have always heard or what you have been previously taught. Consider only what God has revealed in His all-sufficient Word. God has given us this challenge: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 The. 5:21-22). As Isaiah centuries ago wrote, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isa. 1:18).

Once the question was asked, “What think ye of Christ?” (Mat. 22:42). Have you considered the facts about Jesus? John, the apostle, wrote his account of the life of Jesus to give us the facts about Him.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the

Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

The facts presented concerning what Jesus said and did are to cause us to believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of man. Salvation certainly depends on faith in Jesus (8:24). Without that faith, we will be lost (Heb. 11:6). However, that faith is to cause us to obey Him. "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (5:9). The kind of faith in Jesus that saves is the kind of faith that acts upon God's Word and obeys. Inactive faith is a dead faith that even the demons have. That kind of faith will not save! "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jam. 2:19, 24, 26). Have you considered the facts? What think ye?

What think ye of Christ's church? Is Christ's church whatever we want it to be? Is it to reflect our design and desires, or is Christ's church under His authority and according to His design? Is Christ's church only optional, or is it the only place where there is salvation? Jesus said the church belongs to Him (Mat. 16:18). He said all authority belongs to Him (28:18). Inspiration states that Jesus is "saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23) and that the body is the church (1:22-23). The church that belongs to Jesus exists today. If we teach and fol-

low the "word of the kingdom," God's Word (Mat. 13:19), the result will be Christ's church or kingdom (16:18-19). Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We have no right or authority to change it. When we change it by adding to, taking away from, or altering God's Word, we no longer have the church that belongs to Jesus the Christ, the church of which Jesus is savior. The Lord's church is described in the New Testament so it can be duplicated. We can know its organization, its name, its worship, and its work. Have you considered the facts about Christ's church? What think ye?

What think ye about sound doctrine? Does doctrine really matter? It is evident from the New Testament that doctrine (teaching) is significant. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Clearly, if we do not abide in (live by) the doctrine of Christ, we do not have God with us or in us. The emphasis of the New Testament on *sound doctrine* suggests that not all doctrine is sound. Paul wrote of things which are "contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10). He also places the obligation of elders in the church to use sound doctrine. "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). He instructed Titus, the preacher: "But speak thou the things which become sound doc-

trine" (2:1). He warned Timothy in some of his final words concerning the rejection by some of sound doctrine:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Have you considered the facts regarding sound doctrine? What think ye?

Consider Matthew 21:23-27: And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things?** and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? **from heaven, or of men?** And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The simple truth is that what we do in religion is either by the authority of heaven (God) or by the authority of men. Please consider your religion today. By what authority doest thou these things? Is it by heaven's authority? If it is not, it will not save! What think ye? "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 5)

Ken Chumbley

In part four we closed with the authors' conclusion that there was no dispute over the seventh-day Sabbath because, "They all worshipped on God's holy Sabbath day, and none questioned that it was the seventh day of the week (Saturday)," indicating that our next article would see if such a statement can be justified from the Scriptures.

The first passage they quote is Luke 4:16. They do admit that this occurred during Jesus' early ministry and that He lived under the Jewish system. They then state: "Yet, in three and one-half years of ministry, not once did Jesus even hint to His disciples that the Sabbath would be altered." This is where the authors make an assumption—a false assumption—that all of those who do not keep the seventh-day Sabbath do not because Sunday is the day of worship during the New Testament. Such is not correct. The Scriptures teach that the Sabbath was taken away—nailed to the cross—along with all of the law given through Moses (Col. 2:14). Jesus did more than hint to His disciples that the Law would be taken away when it was

fulfilled (Mat. 5:18).

Following their reference to Luke 4:16, the authors then quote Matthew 24:20—where Jesus speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and tells the disciples to pray that their flight from Jerusalem would not be on the Sabbath. They conclude: "He acknowledged the Sabbath would remain in force." Such is **not** proof that it was "still in force" but that the unbelieving Jews were still keeping the Sabbath and would have the gates to the city locked. Their statement is merely an assumption since the text does not indicate that the disciples were keeping the Sabbath—they would need other verses to show that, and such verses cannot be found. However, some verses can be found which show that the disciples met for Christian worship on the first day of the week. (We will discuss this in our next article.)

The writers' next effort at giving proof for Christians keeping the Sabbath is in reference to the statement by the Hebrews' writer:

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the peo-

ple of God (Heb. 4:8-9).

This is, of course, a reference to Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land. The rest that *remaineth* is a reference to the heavenly rest which awaits the people of God. The authors want the passage to speak of the keeping of the Sabbath day, but such is to twist the very words of the text. The rest remains because it is not achieved in this life but comes in the next. The Hebrews' writer goes on to state that Christians should labor to enter into that rest and not fall, as many did in the long-ago through unbelief (4:11). Thus, the context shows it has no reference to a weekly Sabbath-keeping by Christians.

The authors of the book now turn to look at New Testament passages that mention law and—falsely—conclude that such references all have references to the Law of Moses. They state, "Where there is no law, there is no sin." While that statement is true, it is faulty reasoning to assume that the **only** law mentioned in the New Testament is the Law of Moses. Paul speaks specifically of the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). For the Law of

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

The Providence of God

PROVIDENCE

We can observe the providence of God in His controlling influence to prepare the world for the sending of His Son to die upon the cross to save sinful mankind. Paul writes, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). God was bringing everything together for the proper time to send His Son. This is providence. Let us go back into the Old Testament and notice just a few of the events recorded for us regarding the plan of God and His working providentially to bring about His saving plan.

Abraham received some great promises resulting from his great faith (Heb. 11:8ff). “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”

(Gen. 12:1-3). To a great extent the remainder of the Bible is God working these promises out, preparing everything for the sending of His Son to bless all families of the earth.

As we continue through Genesis, we see the birth of Isaac (the son of promise). Abraham sends his servant to his country to seek a wife for Isaac. We observe the providence of God as the servant prays asking God for success. God, through His providential workings, sends Rebekah who performs that which the servant had requested. No doubt God was at work in Rebekah’s family allowing her to go with the servant and marry Isaac.

We observe the birth of Esau and Jacob and see how Esau despised his birthright, and Jacob then receiving the blessing. Upon the death of Isaac, Jacob must flee to escape the anger of Esau. He also goes to Abraham’s homeland and there falls in love with Rachel but is given Leah as his wife. We observe Jacob serving Laban seven more years for Rachel. Then we see God making Jacob rich by providentially controlling the birth of the sheep according to the agreement between Jacob and Laban.

Through the marriage to Leah and Rachel, God providentially works things so Leah has several sons while Rachel is barren. “And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren” (29:31). After Leah had four sons, Rachel gives her handmaid to Jacob and she bare him two sons, then Leah’s handmaid had two sons. Leah then conceived two more sons. At this point Rachel finally conceives and bares Jacob a son—Joseph. We observe in all this that God was be-

ginning to make of Abraham’s seed a great nation.

At this point we also see God, through His providential care, preserving the nation. Jacob had a great love for Joseph and showed partiality to him with the result that his brothers hated him. Joseph also contributed to their hatred when he tells of his dreams of his brothers bowing down to him. “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more” (37:3-5). When his father sends Joseph to see how his brethren are doing, his brothers decide to kill him. Reuben talks them out of killing him, but instead they sell him to the Ishmeelites who were passing by. He was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar.

While in Potiphar’s house, everything he did prospered so Potiphar made him ruler of his house. “And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand” (39:3-4). Yet, time came when Joseph had to run from the seduction of Potiphar’s wife. As a result of Potiphar’s wife’s lies, Joseph was placed in prison. Yet, God continued to show mercy unto Joseph even while in prison so “the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper” (39:22-23).

While Joseph was in prison Pharaoh’s butler and baker offended him causing Pharaoh to place them in prison. They both had a dream which Joseph interpreted for them. His interpretation held true (since it came from God) and the chief butler was restored to his former state. After two years, Pharaoh had two dreams which the magicians and wise men of Egypt could not interpret. The butler remembered Joseph interpreting his dream and informed Pharaoh about him. He is called before Pharaoh and gives the interpretation of his dream: there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh sets Joseph over all the land of Egypt (41:41).

With the knowledge of the coming famine, Joseph made the proper preparations. The time came when Joseph’s father and brothers were in need of food, thus Jacob sent his sons to buy corn in Egypt. The second time his brothers appear before him, he reveals himself to them. Notice Joseph’s

belief in God’s providence in all the events which had transpired when he says to them: “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life....And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (45:4-5, 7).

Eventually, Joseph brings his father and brothers to Egypt. After Jacob’s death and burial, Joseph’s brothers sent a messenger to him saying, “Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him” (50:16-17). They then came to Joseph and fell before him saying that they would be his servants. Notice the great statement by Joseph acknowledging God’s providence in all that took place. “And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (50:19-20). God was providentially providing for the Israelites even when Joseph’s brothers sold him into bondage and throughout all the events that transpired within his life to save them through the famine that came. God was also carrying out His plan in making the Israelites a great nation when He brings them to Egypt and while there they grow to a great multitude.

Transposing ourselves down through history to the time when Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was the Persian king and whose rule extended over all the Jews. He had elevated a man named Haman above all the princes that were with him (Est. 3:1). The king had commanded that all bow and do obeisance at the passing of Haman. All did except for Mordecai, who sat at the king’s gate. When Haman saw that Mordecai was a Jew, he determined not to take vengeance on just Mordecai, but the entire race. So he planned to kill every Jew: man, woman, and child. Thus, Haman goes to the king and says, “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (3:8-9). Upon this, Ahasuerus gives Haman permission to fulfill his request. They were going to kill all the Jews on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (which was eleven months away). If this decree had been performed, then the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have failed, and all the prophecies about the Savior and His church would have been proven false.

By seeing how this calamity was averted, we gain a great lesson on the providence of God. While we might not know all that is involved in God’s providence in sparing the Jews, we should start with a physically beautiful young girl being

born of Jewish parents. She was being raised by her cousin, because she had neither father nor mother, in the Capitol of Shushan. That cousin just happened to be the righteous Mordecai. Mordecai had found out that there was a plot against the king by his chamberlains Bigthana and Teresh and had informed the king through Esther. The king did not reward Mordecai at the time, but it was written in his chronicles.

Then there was the virtuous Vashti, the queen. Ahasuerus made a great feast and was showing all the riches and great things of his kingdom. After the men were “merry with wine” he desired to show off the beauty of his queen. He orders Vashti to come and show the men her beauty. “But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him” (1:12). The king takes council of the wise men and decides to depose the queen. After a while the king “remembered Vashti” (2:1) so the king’s servants suggested that he find a new queen. Esther was brought before the king and found favor in his eyes. “And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti” (2:17). However, in all this time Esther did not reveal that she was Jewish. It was during this time that Esther was queen that Mordecai revealed the plot to kill the king.

When Mordecai perceived Haman’s plans he charged to Esther “that she should go into the king, to make supplication unto

him, and to make request before him for her people” (4:8). Mordecai tells her, “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (4:13-14). So, Esther decides to go into the king, even though going in without being called by the king could cost a person his life (if the king did not hold out his sceptre, the person was immediately put to death). When she appears before him, he does hold out his sceptre. She asks him to come to a banquet she prepared for him and to bring Haman. At that banquet, she request for him to come to another banquet the next day. Haman leaves the first banquet, “joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai” (5:9). When he arrives home, he calls his family and friends and informs them of all his good fortune. Then he adds, “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate” (5:13). They suggested to him to build a gallows and ask the king the next day that Mordecai be hanged.

That night the king could not sleep, so he had the chronicles read to him. It was read how that Mordecai had informed the king of the plot to kill him. He asked what honor Mordecai had received and found out he had not been honored. At that time Haman comes in

with the intention of speaking to the king of hanging Mordecai. However, the king asks Haman what should be done to the man whom the king wants to honor. Haman’s pride caused him to think the king was talking about him. Thus, he gives the advice to the king: “Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour” (6:8-9). The king instructs Haman to do this for Mordecai. Later in the day, after Haman had honored Mordecai, Haman is called to the banquet which Esther gives the king. When Ahasuerus asks Esther what her request is, she responds, “If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage” (7:3-4). When the king asks Esther who has done this, she responds that it was Haman. The king goes out to the palace garden in anger and when he returns he sees that Haman has fallen on Esther’s bed. He has Haman taken out and hanged on the gallows he had built to hang Mordecai (7:8-10).

Then, he gives the Jews the right to destroy all those who attacked them and defend themselves against all their enemies. Thus, God brought about a great deliverance to the Jewish people. Even though the name of God is not found in the book of Esther, His hand is seen working behind the scenes to save His people through whom He will send the Savior.

Space forbids us from discussing the two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Daniel 2 and 7. God reveals four great empires and during the days of the fourth that He would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed. However, as one considers the four world empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greece or Alexander the Great, and Roman), you can see God's providence through them in each empire contributing something to the perfect time for the sending of His Son.

Through these examples and others we see that God can and will use nature and the natural elements to carry out His purposes. God, in His providence, also takes care of the animal creation (Mat. 6:26) and will use them in special ways also (Gen. 22:13; Num. 11:31; 1 Kings 17:6; et al.). He also has used governments and will use individuals, and yet do so without violating their free moral agency.

While we know God will providentially care for His children today, because of the very nature of providence, we cannot say that we know any specific incident in our life is God's providence. A good illustration is that of Paul and the situation with Onesimus. Even Paul, an inspired author, would not say that it was the providence of God but would only say, "For per-

haps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever" (Phm. 15). If an inspired writer of the Bible would only say it was "perhaps," then we should be extremely careful in our pronouncements of God's providence. We know the fact that God will take care of us, but we cannot point to a specific incident in our life and claim that we know that is the providential work of God in our life. It may well be that it is the providence of God in our life but there is no way to prove it (it would only be one's subjective feelings).

CONCLUSION

When we learn of the providence of God and contemplate it regarding those who are Christians, it gives us great comfort realizing that the God of this universe is watching over us. Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Seeing God's providence through the ages, we then learn to appreciate what Paul says. God promises us: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6). We know that God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, God will providentially provide a way of escape. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Consider the wonderful prom-

ise of God made by Solomon: "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken" (Pro. 3:23-26).

We know that God, through His providential care, will take care of us physically (Mat. 6:25-34), but we know that He will also take care of our spiritual needs. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:19). Thus, there is no reason for the Christian to worry. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (4:6-7). The Christian knows that he can turn every problem and care upon God. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Truly, a study of the providence of God brings the Christian hope and courage and encourages us to live for Him who died for us.

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Moses to no longer be in effect or binding today does not mean that we are without law—any more than the thirteen colonies were without law when they declared their independence from Great Britain. Law still existed, but it was no longer the laws of Great Britain that were bound upon the people, but it was the laws of the States—many of which were identical to laws that were bound in Great Britain. Similarly, there are laws from the Law of Moses that are found as part of the Law of Christ. We are bound to obey those laws because they are part of the Law of Christ—not because they were a part of the Law of Moses.

The writers of the book under review, now turn to the words of Jesus:

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and

shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 5:18-19).

They want to place the emphasis on the nineteenth verse and ignore the phrase "till all be fulfilled" in the eighteen verse. That phrase certainly means something! If the Old Testament Law were to continue until "heaven and earth pass away" then the phrase "till all be fulfilled" is superfluous and without meaning. However, all words in Scripture do have meaning. Jesus is teaching that nothing of the Law should pass from the Law until it was all fulfilled. Who could fulfill that Law? Could man? No—since all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). The only One who could and did fulfill the Law was the sinless Christ. When He died on Calvary's cross, He had obeyed the Law and not violated one "jot or tittle" of that Law as it was nailed to His cross (Col. 2:14). The authors also quote our

Lord's words: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and assume that He is talking about the Ten Commandments as they state: "Love compels Christians who learn the truth about the Law of God to keep the Ten Commandments." If Jesus was specifically referring to the Ten Commandments, then He gave no commandments of His own. However, in that same passage, Jesus said: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (15:12)—and that commandment is not a part of the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, a study of the New Testament shows that there are numerous commands that our Lord gave—both personally and through the inspired writers of the New Testament. The authors state the need for "rightly dividing the word of God" which is a Scriptural admonition (2 Tim. 2:15). However, to do such one must recognize the difference between the Old Covenant and the New.

More to come.

Deceased

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Brock Hartwigsen

I do not believe that God brought the Covid-19 pandemic on America to punish America or to test the church. I believe that it is an example of what God tells us in Ecclesiastes 9:11, that "time and

chance happeneth to them all."

I started preaching back in 1960 and I have seen some sad trends in the church over the years. However, I believe that the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent ban-

ning or outlawing of Christians gathering together to worship God tested our faith and priorities. In my humble opinion, unlike Abraham sacrificing Isaac, many if not most of the brotherhood failed the

test.

In the 1950s, Rex Humbard's "Cathedral of Tomorrow" became one of the first televised evangelical shows with a national audience and televised church services. We as a brotherhood knew and understood that sitting at home in front of a TV on Sunday morning and watching a church service was not a biblically acceptable alternative to assembling with fellow Christians.

In the 1950s Robert Schuller and a few other denominational preachers introduced drive-in church services. Such a concept was uniformly mocked and rejected not only by the church but also by the vast majority of our denominational neighbors as being unscriptural because it was not an acceptable Biblical alternative to the assembling of ourselves together. One of the original purposes for drive-in-movies was to give some privacy to those who went to the movies. Privacy is the exact opposite of the Biblical purpose for assembling together.

However, because of possibly getting sick and maybe even dying,

or the threat of government reprisals, and scorn from our non-Christian neighbors the vast majority of the church forsook the assembling of ourselves together. We substitute these false practices, which we uniformly, for biblical sound reasons, rejected for almost 70 years, as acceptable replacements for assembling of ourselves together as the church. How can we possibly go back to teaching that such worship practices are not acceptable after we demonstrated that we believe they are. Some in the denominational world are already asking why spend \$100,000s for building church buildings when we can build drive-in facilities for \$10,000s?

When our governor *outlawed* church services, the leadership of the congregation where I preach told all the members of the congregation to do what they felt they needed to do. The members were told that we were canceling all our regular service, except for the Sunday morning worship service. The first two weeks of the shutdown we openly and publicly met in our

building. When the governor said he was going to have the state police visit all church buildings on Sundays, take photos of the license plates, quarantine all who attended services and even possible fine them, we followed the example of the second and third century Christians and found a modern-day equivalent of the catacombs. We moved our assembly to a secret location and worshiped God together as the church. Our attendance was cut by 50%, but we did have a visiting family attend one Sunday.

It truly saddened my heart to see so many sound and dedicated congregations who, at the first sign of opposition gave in. It is my belief that the vast majority of the brotherhood failed to heed Jesus' words to the church in Smyrna.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Stanton, KY

Worship

God has mandated that we worship Him (John 4:23-24). In that which God has mandated regarding worship, we are to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), pray to the Father through the mediation of Jesus the Christ (1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:17), have communion with Christ and other Christians in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34), study God's Word together in the preaching of the Word (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2), and put money into the common treasury of the church (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9). God mandated that we "come together in the church" (1 Cor. 11:18) or "come together...into

one place" (11:20). God also mandated when we are to come together by the example given in Troas: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7), and the direct statement to the Corinthians: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). There would be other times where we are authorized to come together that would be optional (as decided by the elders or leaders of a con-

gregation), but this worship upon the first day of the week is something God has mandated. No man or group of men have any right to suspend or dismiss or change this first day of the week worship. If man has the right to change that coming "together in the church...into one place" (11:18, 20), then they would have the right to change any of the other aspects of worship God has mandated: singing, prayer, Lord's Supper, preaching, and giving. If we do not have the right to change these, then we do not have the right to change coming "together in the church...into one place."

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Abounding in the Lord's Work

E. L. Freeland

Idleness is a curse to God's people. Adam was placed in Eden with duties. He was to "dress and keep the garden" (Gen. 2:15). Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me" (John 9:4). "Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). The worthy or virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 was an industrious lady "and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Pro. 31:27).

God delivered Israel from bondage. They crossed the Red Sea on dry land by His grace. They were fed Manna from heaven. "They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7). This idleness led to idolatry, bringing the downfall of twenty-three thousand in one day because of fornication (10:8). Paul warns the young widow not to be idle, lest she fall into various sins (1 Tim. 5:13). He admonishes the Philippian brethren, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phi. 2:12).

The apostle Paul said we should be, "always abounding in the work of the Lord." To *abound* is to be full of; heavily engaged in; thoroughly engrossed and involved in; a wholehearted participant, in the

Lord's work. The Lord never put out the "*Part-time help wanted*" sign. "Always," "see ye first," "Offer your body a living sacrifice," "Love with all thy heart, soul, strength, and mind," are phrases describing the worker God accepts.

The Bible teaches us that there are various kinds of works. The works of men are vain (Mat. 15:9). The works of the law will not justify (Gal. 2:16). The works of the flesh will condemn (5:19-21). However, works of righteousness will cause mankind to be accepted with him (Acts 10:35). What are these works of righteousness? Psalm 119:172 declares, "for all thy commandments are righteousness." Obeying the commands of God, whatever they may be, is the work of the Lord. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

What is the Lord's work? Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). Our most urgent task is to save the lost. Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Jesus commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:19-20). Jesus' reason for teaching: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The apostles obeyed Jesus' command. On Pentecost, they taught the multitude. Hearers learned the truth, and asked, "What shall we do?" They were taught to repent and to be baptized for the remission of sins. Both those who taught and those who obeyed were abounding in the Lord's work.

After his conversion, Paul spent the rest of his life preaching the Gospel—God's power to save. He preached it to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:1). At the house of the Philippian jailer Paul and Silas spake unto them (the lost) the Word of the Lord (Acts 16). The jailer and his family responded in obedience. Both were abounding in the Lord's work.

Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them. When they believed Philip's preaching, they were baptized. Philip was also sent to the eunuch.

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Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Calling on the Lord's Name

Many in the religious world have taught to be saved all one must do is to call on the name of the Lord. In teaching such, they generally contradict themselves because many teach that man can do nothing in saving himself. Yet, they teach that one needs to call on the name of the Lord. Let us consider this important Biblical phrase.

The background for this is found in the prophecy of Joel when he stated, "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32).

Notice first that it is those whom God calls. When we come to the New Testament times, we learn how God calls us today. Paul tells us, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 The. 2:14). The Lord calls us by the Gospel. The Gospel is that which the apostles were commissioned to preach in the Great Commission. Jesus said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark

16:15). It is this Gospel that is God's power to save: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

While God calls us by the Gospel, we have the responsibility to call on the name of the Lord. Peter, in his great Gospel sermon on Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, stated that what was taking place was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Peter then quotes Joel's prophecy and ends it with the statement: "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:21). Since these were Jews and in Jerusalem on Pentecost, they already had faith in God. They did not believe in Jesus as being God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). Thus, Peter's sermon instilled in these Jews faith in Jesus as being "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He also convicted them of the sin of crucifying the Savior of the world causing them to cry out, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37).

Peter, in his quotation of Joel's prophecy, had previously instructed them what they needed to **do**: "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:21). However, they possibly remembered Jesus' teaching that saying was not sufficient. He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). Thus, Peter did not tell them to simply state their faith in Jesus as the Son of God and their acceptance of Him

as their Savior (which is what many teach people to say to have salvation—the sinner's prayer). However, Peter did tell them what they must **do** to call on the name of the Lord for their salvation. He said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Repent and be baptized is what they had to **do** to call on the name of the Lord to be saved. Peter continued to encourage them to "Save yourselves from this un-to-ward generation" (2:40). Those "that gladly received his word were baptized" (2:41); they called upon the name of the Lord; they were saved.

We find confirmation of this understanding when we next read of this phrase in the New Testament. The apostle Paul is retelling his conversion to the Jewish mob recorded in Acts 22. As he was traveling to Damascus to persecute Christians, the Lord appeared to him in a blinding light. After Jesus reveals Himself to Paul (then Saul), Saul says, "What shall I do, Lord?" (22:10). Notice Saul calls Jesus "Lord" but recognizes that verbally calling Jesus Lord is not sufficient. Jesus also knows a verbal calling Him "Lord" was not going to save Saul. Thus, Jesus tells Saul to go into Damascus, "and there it shall be told thee of all things which are

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

appointed for thee to do” (22:10). Jesus sends Ananias to Saul to tell him what he must **do**. When he comes to Saul, Ananias sees one who believes in Jesus, is penitent of his sins. Yet, Saul still had not been told what he must do to be saved, and he was still in his sins. Thus, Ananias tells Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16). Thus, the way to call on the name of the Lord was not an audible statement, but the action of being baptized upon one’s faith and repentance.

Paul uses this in speaking of the salvation of both Jew and Gentile

and there being no difference between them. He writes, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). He then asks rhetorical questions regarding calling and how they need to believe but need a preacher who must be sent for them to do so. Paul then says, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel” (10:16). One calls on the name of the Lord by obeying the Gospel. That is what Jesus told His apostles to preach (Mark 16:15). In preaching the Gospel, Jesus then states, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (16:16). This is what Peter preached on Pentecost and this is how one

obeys the Gospel and by his obedience to the Gospel calls on the name of the Lord.

Do not be deceived by those who state you only need to audibly say something. That is contrary to what Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21. However, if you wish to be saved, you must call on the name of the Lord. How you call on His name is when you believe, repent, and are baptized for salvation or the remission of sins. If you have not called on the name of the Lord as the Scriptures teach, please do so immediately. Do not delay your obedience and salvation.

MH

Continued from Page 1

He preached unto him, Jesus. They came to a certain water and the eunuch said, “See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” The Word had been taught. The eunuch responded. A soul was saved. The work of the Lord was being done.

The apostles were fervent in spirit. They loved the lost. We should never become so involved in organizational and promotional matters that we never get to the real work of the Lord—teaching the lost. Organization is profitable, promotion is appropriate, but let us not lose sight of our real purpose.

The work of the Lord is not complete in oratory. Words without conduct to confirm the words are vain. We are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:12). Jesus’ followers are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We are to show the way in action—giv-

ing evidence that we are slaves of Jesus and that He is our Master.

Caring is a characteristic of our Savior. He rejoiced with those that rejoiced, and He wept with those who wept. He ate with sinners—not to endorse their sin, but to show them there was a better way. There are those who feel they have lost the battle. Heavy hands and hearts need to be lifted. A helping hand, a kind word, an indication that someone cares may do much to melt a heart of stone. Jesus said, I was sick, hungry, naked, in prison, etc., and you came, you cared.

We must not leave the impression that we only wish to count converts, but that we love as Jesus did. We must show that truly we believe the disobedient to be lost and that it deeply troubles us. If the lost person is convinced that we are honestly and deeply concerned about him, he will likely listen. If he listens, we have made a step in

the right direction.

Caring for each other is the work of the Lord. “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ,” Paul admonishes.

Defending the faith is a part of the work of the Lord. Paul was set for the defense of the Gospel. Jude directs, “Contend earnestly for the faith.” To effectively execute this task, we must put on the whole armor of God and stand firmly, kindly, and effectively, for the Prince of Peace. Paul said, “Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Abounding in the work of the Lord is not to be expected to be without a price. Paul served the Lord, and he was subjected to much abuse. “In labors abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons oft,” is his description, in part, of the cost sometimes paid by those abounding in the Lord’s work. Yet he declared, “I count all things but

loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (Phi. 3:9). We must not be weary in well-doing. If the road is hard and the way is dreary, despair not. At the end is death. Death for the faithful is the *gateway to glory*. Paul declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have fin-

ished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). “Blessed are the dead which

die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13). We cannot have flowery beds of ease both here and hereafter. The choice is ours. Abound in the Lord’s work here and rest in mansions of the blest on yonder fair shore.

Deceased

Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 6)

Ken Chumbley

In our first article in this series, we noted how the authors of the book dealt with Acts 20:7 wherein they ignored the context that shows that the disciples met together on the first day of the week for the purpose of observing the Lord’s Supper. Their reference to Acts 20:7 is found in chapter six of the book, in which they seek to show that the Lord’s Day is not the first day of the week but has reference to the seventh-day Sabbath.

Early in this chapter, the authors state, “Did you know there is no Bible reference to the *first day of the week* as being the Lord’s Day? Not one single scripture makes that connection.” What the authors do **not** admit to is the fact that there is no Bible reference to the **Sabbath day** being the Lord’s Day. There is only one passage of Scripture that uses the expression “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10) which reads: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.” John does not state specifically what day he is referencing, such can only be determined from a study of the Scriptures. The authors **assume** that it has reference to the Sabbath, and thus spent a large part of the chapter berating those who do

not observe the seventh-day Sabbath—even though they have not offered any proof of their case.

They do make an assertion—for which they offer no proof—when they state:

In the Roman Empire, the first day of the week (Sunday) was called ‘the Lord’s [Emperor’s] day’ because Sunday was the day the emperor received his treasury payments. Sun-worshipping pagans also celebrated Sunday as “the venerable day of the Sun.”

Such, even if true, do **not** prove their case. They further state:

The Romans had banished John to the lonely island of Patmos for his testimony of Jesus. Do you think John would acknowledge Sunday, the **Lord’s Day** honoring the Roman Emperor or the **Day of the Sun**, as the day of his Lord?

Thus, based on their assumption and without proof, the authors contend that John kept the Sabbath. Much of the rest of the chapter deals with references to the Sabbath both from the Old and New Testaments, but not one of them shows Christians engaging in Christian worship on the Sabbath. They do, however, give scant attention to passages mentioning the first day of the week.

Eight passages mention the first

day of the week; five of these are Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1. As the writers correctly state, these “correspond with the day when Christ’s women disciples returned to the tomb on the resurrection morning.” It is interesting to note that they do acknowledge that the first day of the week was “the resurrection morning.”

The next verse they reference is John 20:19. They write:

We find the trembling disciples of Christ assembled on the first day of the week, resurrection Sunday. Following the crucifixion, they were huddled together behind closed doors barred shut for fear of the Jews. How could anyone believe this was a worship service?

They give no reference to context. However, the context shows that Thomas was not present on that occasion but was on the next occasion, a week later (John 20:24). Why were they assembled on the **first day of the week** and **not** the Sabbath two weeks in a row? Jesus appeared to the disciples on both occasions when they were assembled on the first day of the week, yet He gives no reprimand for their being together at that time rather than the Sabbath.

The second reference is Acts

20:7. We dealt with this passage in our first article in the series. There we noted that, again, the book's authors ignore the context. The context shows that while Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem, he waited a whole week before meeting with the disciples to "break bread." If the Lord's Supper (breaking of bread) could have been partaken of on any day, why did Paul not call the brethren together after he arrived so he could have continued his journey? Again, if the Christians were supposed to be keeping the Sabbath, why is there no mention of them meeting on the Sabbath—or a reprimand from Paul because they were meeting on the first day of the week and not the seventh-day Sabbath?

The last verse the authors' reference is 1 Corinthians 16:2. In commenting on this verse they write:

In that verse, Paul instructs the brethren to systematically store up a

collection for the benefit of famine-stricken believers in Jerusalem, by **laying aside** something on the first day of the week.

Why on the "first day of the week"? Do the authors not suggest a reason as to **why** it was to be the first day of the week and not another? They imply that such were private collections in the homes of the brethren. They do indicate that Paul desired the contribution to be ready but ignore that he wrote: "that there be no gatherings when I come." If the laying by in store was done privately, it would not be ready when Paul came but would have to be gathered up. Furthermore, the previous verse uses collection, which implies that the funds were to be gathered into one place—not a multitude of collections in the homes of brethren. If the disciples were meeting on the seventh-day Sabbath, why did Paul not state that the laying by in store was to be done on that day? If they

were meeting on the first day of the week, to break bread—as the brethren at Troas were—then to have such done on the first day of the week makes perfect sense.

The authors conclude the section by asking: "Do you see any evidence that God transferred His holy day from Saturday to Sunday?" Such is the wrong question since the Sabbath has been nailed to the cross along with the rest of the Old Testament Law (Col. 2:14). The authors need to examine more the verses dealing with the first day of the week and note the context. The rest of chapter six is an attempt to justify the keeping of the Sabbath day, and an effort to show that the seventh day is still the seventh despite changes in the calendar. In the next article, we will examine the authors' claims that **man** changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

Deceased

Upon What Is the Church Built?

Gary W. Summers

A few weeks ago, included in *Spiritual Perspectives* [the author's bulletin] was an article in which a woman named Carla attempted to defend Roman Catholicism primarily by asserting that the Apocryphal books were omitted from Protestant Bibles but that Catholics had them—as if that made some sort of difference. Those books were written prior to the New Testament and are not under the new covenant of Jesus Christ. In a later post, she cited Matthew 16:18 and tried to insist that the church was built on Peter. She presented all manner of information from Greek lexicons,

as if she were somewhat of an expert (although she failed to list her credentials). She only listed one source for one item in her lengthy paragraph. For all the reader knows, she was copying information from a Catholic Website. In other words, without documentation, she has no credibility. Among other things she asserted:

On him [Peter] he [Jesus] builds the Church....but the primacy is given to Peter, by which is made clear that there is one Church and one chair....if someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he think that he holds the faith? If he deserts the chair of Peter upon

whom the Church was built, can he be confident that he is in the Church? God bless each of you!

Carla clearly stated that the church is built on Peter. If that were so, then several things would have to be true.

1. The church of Jesus Christ would be built on a fallible man. Does this fact even need to be pointed out? Understand that no disrespect is meant to Peter, but he was a human being with flaws. When he stepped out of the boat and walked on water toward Jesus, his faith weakened, and he began to sink. Jesus had to save him (Mat.

14:25-32). Jesus specifically asked him why he doubted. Is this one upon whom the church should be built?

2. Immediately after the passage where Jesus spoke of building His church, He spoke of His coming death in Jerusalem, as well as His resurrection (16:21). Peter rebuked Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you!” (16:22). Jesus then said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (16:23). Is the church indeed built upon someone whom the Lord called Satan?

3. On the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas, Peter denied Jesus three times, as He had previously predicted. After the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at Peter, after which he “went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). Is this one upon whom the church should be built—one who denied Christ?

4. Now someone will surely point out that bringing up these things is not fair—that Peter repented of these things, and that is true. None of these things is mentioned to belittle Peter, but it does show that he made mistakes and was not a perfect being. Nor did he become flawless on the Day of Pentecost after he received the Holy Spirit. He was to be blamed for wrongful actions, as reported by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14. If the church is built on Peter, it is going to be built on an imperfect human being.

5. Peter could not meet today’s qualifications to be a pope because the Scriptures teach that he was married. In Matthew 8:14-15, Jesus healed a woman who is referred to as Peter’s “wife’s mother.” Peter was

married! Oh, but that was before he became the pope. Really? Does someone desire to explain when Peter became the pope, then? In the event someone was tempted to say that Peter’s wife died after Pentecost, well—he still was married to her two decades later when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 9:5, which was about AD 57. Furthermore, she traveled with him. Paul asked if he did not have the right “to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles of the Lord, and Cephas?” Carla has already admitted that she knows Cephas is another name for Peter; so then, she must know that he was married and therefore disqualified from being pope, a word and a concept never mentioned in the Scriptures. So then, how could the church be built upon someone who cannot meet today’s prerequisites?

6. The household of God, the church, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being “the chief cornerstone,” Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:20. All of the apostles (including Peter) share an equality in this text, as do the prophets. There is only one individual in this passage who is exalted—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone, the most important part of the foundation. Peter himself stresses the same thing concerning Jesus in 1 Peter 2:6: “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” Was Peter speaking of himself? Of course not. It is on Jesus that all men must believe. It was Jesus Who was rejected but has been exalted (2:7-8). If Peter were the head of the church, this would have been an excellent time for him to have made the claim. In-

stead, he honors Jesus.

7. The Bible actually teaches that Jesus is the head of the church. First of all, He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28:18). Notice that the Lord did not say, “I have all authority in heaven, and I have given Peter all authority on earth.” No, the church belongs to Christ—not to Peter. Jesus is the Head of the body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Peter never claimed to be the head.

One Chair?

What exactly does Catholic Carla mean when she says there is “one Church and one chair”? *Chair* does not appear anywhere in the King James Version of the Bible. It occurs once in the New King James (2 Kin. 4:10), but this text has no relationship to the church. Paul talked about unity in Ephesians 4:4-6. He stated that there is one body (church, cf. 1:22-23), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Try as the reader might, he cannot find one chair anywhere in a text that is promoting unity! She is using terminology that is not Biblical and expects everyone to agree with her! Does she not realize that anyone else could do the same thing—come along with terminology invented after the New Testament was written and then tell everyone they must conform to it?

In fact, Protestant denominations have done exactly that in their assumption that a congregation of Christians is led by “the pastor.” This phrase is not in the New Testament. *Pastor* does not even appear in the singular anywhere in the New Testament, nor is a church ever said to be led by a single indi-

vidual. Always we find a plurality of pastors (bishops, elders). The Mormons have their own unbiblical terminology, as do Jehovah's Witnesses. They insist that God must be called Jehovah even though the word is never once used in the New Testament. Why are people never content to use Biblical terminology exclusively? If they did, they would not be able to teach false doctrines that are different from what the Word teaches.

Jesus and Peter Contrasted

Not only did Peter never use any title such as pope but he also comes across as being a humble man. When he went to the household of Cornelius, for example, the centurion "fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*" (Acts 10:25). The apostle did not say, "You are wise to accept my supremacy and to recognize that I stand in the place of Christ." No, he responded by lifting Cornelius up and saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (10:26). This is strange behavior for one who is supposed to be highly exalted. Jesus did not react this same way. In Matthew 8:2, a leper worshiped Him and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus did not rebuke the man for worshiping Him or calling Him Lord. He simply agreed to heal him (8:3).

Jesus agreed that Simon's assessment of Him as the Son of God was correct (16:13-19). He confessed that He was the Son of the Blessed before the high priest, which led to His crucifixion (Mark 14:61-62). Peter, on the other hand, never accepted the worship or exaltation of men. When Peter wrote his letters, he did not describe himself as the chief apostle, but simply an apostle

of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1). In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter addressed the elders receiving his letter and never once mentioned his alleged "primacy." He merely referred to himself as "a fellow elder."

Confident About Being in the Church

Carla asked if anyone could be confident about being in the church if he deserted the "chair of Peter" (whatever that means). In reality, confidence can only truly be obtained when a person does what the Bible says. Since Peter's name has been frequently mentioned, there must be a certain amount of respect for him on the part of Catholics. Therefore, why not consider what Peter taught as he presented the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost? All will agree with the part of his message where he quotes a prophecy from David to show that Christ would be raised from the dead (Acts 2:22-36). Not only had the resurrection been prophesied; Peter and the rest of the apostles had seen Him and were eyewitnesses of it.

The people who were convinced by the evidence realized that they had crucified the Messiah; a violent act that could not be undone. So they asked what they should do (2:37). Peter answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins" (2:38). "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (2:41). They continued to preach, and people continued to repent and be baptized. In fact, "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (2:47).

Peter did not mention faith because it was that very thing that

prompted the question. *Repentance* is a Biblical concept that means—not only to be sorry for—but to make a change in the way one is living. In other words, one does not repent of drunkenness when he is planning on getting drunk the same evening. One does not repent of fornication when he continues to cohabit with a woman to whom he is not married. Repentance involves a change in the way a person lives.

Baptism refers to an immersion in water. No one in the New Testament ever sprinkled water on someone and erroneously called it baptism. Since Carla has such a familiarity with Greek lexicons, she can find out that meaning for herself. But Romans 6:3-5 makes it clear that baptism is a burial in water that corresponds to Jesus being buried in a tomb. As a result of repentance and baptism, disciples were added to the church. By doing what Peter said, anyone today can have confidence that he is in the church.

The Rock

The rock to which Jesus referred in Matthew 16:18 is not the fallible human being, Peter. The rock refers to what Peter had just confessed—the Deity of Jesus. It is this fact that sets Christianity apart from every other religion. All other religions (except Judaism, which has been replaced by the covenant of Christ) have a human founder, who is buried somewhere on the earth. Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11); His tomb remains forever empty. He came down from Heaven and returned to Heaven. He was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14; Phi. 2:5-8). That fact is the rock of the church.

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Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 7)

Ken Chumbley

The seventh chapter of the book we are reviewing—*Ten Commandments Twice Removed*—is entitled “It’s No Secret—Catholic Church Claims the Change.” The authors begin this chapter with the following statement: “We will soon examine some claims and comments made public by the Catholic Church. I disagree with the position of authority on which this religious system thinks to stand. But I want to express my belief that God has His people in all churches—including the Roman Catholic Church.” Note, this is what the authors believe but where is their authority for such a statement? Where does the Bible authorize different churches? Did not the Lord promise to build but one (Mat. 16:18)? Did not the Lord’s blood purchase the church—singular—with His blood (Acts 20:28)? All of His blood went to purchase that church; thus, there was none left to purchase another. Note what our Lord stated: “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Mat. 15:13). Did the Lord build (or plant) the denominational churches or did He build (or plant) just one?

Further, the Scriptures teach that the Lord adds to the church those who are saved (Acts 2:47). The Lord has not, and will not, add a saved individual to any church He did not build. Thus, the Scriptures do not support the notion of the authors that “God has His people in all churches.” Such is wishful thinking on the part of the authors to placate those who differ with their conclusions.

The authors continue by stating: “God looks at the heart and judges people on an individual basis, according to their sincerity.” Again, there is no Scripture given to justify their statement. If the basis of salvation were “sincerity,” there would be many who would be saved who **never** respond to the Gospel message. Saul of Tarsus was sincere when he was persecuting Christians—but he was wrong, he was lost, he was in his sins. Thus, even after believing that Jesus was the Lord (Acts 9), he still had to “wash away” his sins (22:16). Jesus said, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Also, the Hebrews’ writer states, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he

suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). Clearly, sincerity is not enough for one can be sincerely wrong. To be saved one **must** be obedient.

Again, the authors state:

I have many wonderful Catholic friends who are dedicated Christians. I also have many sincere Christian friends who are Sunday-keeping Protestants. I don’t agree with either group about the Sabbath issue, but God did not appoint me to judge any of them.

Again, no Scripture is given to support this belief. True, the Scriptures teach: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mat. 7:1). However, the context shows that there is some judgment that Christians **must** engage in (7:1-6). Jesus taught: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Judgment is to be made, not on appearance (whether one seems to be sincere) but based on the Word of God for all His commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:172).

The authors then state that the purpose of chapter 8 is “to present

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

Michael
Hatcher

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Sinner

We often hear the statement, “We are nothing but sinners” or words to that effect. Statements such as these display a lack of understanding and probably more a sense of humility than anything else. Are Christians nothing but sinners? Is there any difference between those who are Christians and those who are not? In making statements such as “we are nothing but sinners” we are implying there is no difference between the two groups, and we are overlooking some important distinctions and passages.

One of the difficulties in this discussion is when one denies we are sinners, then some will automatically assume you mean that we are sinless. However, that is not the case. We must understand the difference between a sinner and a Christian who commits an act of sin (sinner as opposed to sin). In looking at various passages, I hope we can learn the difference between the two.

Paul’s question is a good place to start when he asks, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1). Obviously, this is a rhetorical question expecting a negative response. We, as Christians, are not to continue in sin. Thus, Paul’s response with the following question,

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (6:2). In becoming a Christian (by being baptized into Christ and into His death, 6:3) we are no longer to live in sin. When we are baptized, we die to sin and we are not to live in it. Instead of continuing in sin, we are to walk “in newness of life” (6:4). That old man of sin has been crucified with Christ with the body of sin being destroyed and we are no longer to serve sin (6:6), as we have died to sin (6:7) to live with Christ (6:8). We are “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (6:11) so we “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (6:12) and not to “yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” (6:13). So, the Christian is not to continue in or live in sin. Sin is not to “have dominion over you” (6:14). The Christian is not to be a sinner. The Christian is to “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (6:13). Then verses 17-18 show the distinction between a sinner and a Christian: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” The thrust of the entire chapter is that those who are baptized into Christ (those who have become Christians) are to die to sin, stop living in sin, stop letting sin have dominion over us, etc. The Christian is not a sinner.

Consider now what the apostle of love, John, writes. One of the purposes that John mentions is

“that your [our—ASV] joy may be full” (1 John 1:4). He then discusses God and His nature: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1:5). What will give us full joy is having fellowship with Him. However, we cannot have fellowship with God and walk in darkness (darkness represents sin). “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1:6). Notice that it is one who walks in darkness or sin is the lifestyle that person chooses to live in. In contrast to such is the one who chooses to “walk in the light” (1:7). He is the one who is in fellowship and who has the blood of Christ continually cleansing him of all sin (1:7). However, this one who is walking in the light will still commit sin on occasion (1:8, 10). The sin of verses 8 and 10 is different than the sin of verse 6. The sin of verse 6 is continuous in nature while the sin of verses 8 and 10 are isolated acts of sin while the continuous nature is that of walking in the light (1:7). A part of that walking in the light (a continuous living according to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures) is continuing to confess our sins (1:9). However, in this passage, there is a stark contrast between the one walking in darkness (1:6) and the one walking in the light (1:7). The one walking in

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

darkness is a sinner while the one walking in the light is a Christian (has the forgiveness of his sins; 1:7, 9). The Christian is **not** a sinner.

Later in the same book, John makes this startling statement: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (3:9). He then repeats much the same words at the end of the book: “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (5:18). Passages such as these (and others) lead to the Wesleyan views of a “second working of grace” whereby the Christian has the Spirit come upon him to strengthen him in such a way that he never sins again. John does state that the one who is born again “doth not commit sin” and “sinneth not.” I once asked someone to simply explain 1 John 3:9. They immediately attacked me for believing the false doctrine of once saved always saved, but they never did even

make an attempt to explain the verse.

Neither of these passages teaches that we can never commit even one sin after being born of God. That teaching would have John contradicting himself and what he wrote in 1 John 1:8, 10:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

How do we harmonize these passages? When we understand the principle set forth in what has been previously written, it becomes very clear to us. It is discussing lifestyle, so in both passages, John uses a present tense verb to show that one who has been born again (a perfect passive participle) sinneth not. The present tense for “sinneth not” shows this is continuous action and thus dealing with one’s lifestyle—he does not continue or live in sin. The Christian is not a sinner, even though he will commit acts of sin (1:8, 10) as he walks in the light (1:7).

Jesus makes this observation: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). Jesus uses present tense (*committeth*) to show continuous action. That one who continues to commit sin, he lives in sin, is the servant of sin. The Christian (one who is born again) does not live in sin, he walks in the light (1 John 1:7). The one who is not a Christian (would include one who began the Christian walk but has not continued in that walk) is one who is the servant of sin because he continues to live in sin.

The Scriptures clearly show that a Christian is not a sinner, and a sinner is not a Christian. We as Christians need to make a clear distinction in our speech between the two. This includes ending our saying things like: “We are all sinners,” or “I am a sinner,” or other like phrases that Christians often use. Help people see there is a difference in the life the Christian lives and the life the sinner lives.

MH

published claims of the Papal system regarding Sunday-keeping and Protestantism.” It is amazing that at the beginning of the chapter the authors state that they “disagree with the position of authority on which this religious system things to stand,” yet they seek justification of their position regarding the Sabbath based on the claims of the Roman Catholic Church. That same church claims to have authority for its “Papal system.” The authors expect their readers to reject the claims on the Roman Catholic Church for its “Papal system” while

at the same time accepting the claims of the same organization concerning the matter of the Sabbath that the Roman Catholic Church claims to have changed from the Seventh-day of the week (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday). Why should their claims for one be accepted but their claims for the other be rejected? Further, whatever the Roman Catholic Church may claim about **any** subject is **not** the authority in matters of religion. It is God’s Word that is truth (John 17:17)—**not** the teaching of the Roman Catholic

Church or the teaching of Danny Shelton and Shelley Quinn (the authors of the book we have been reviewing) or, indeed, of any other individual or man-made religious group.

As we have examined the teaching of the book *Ten Commandments Twice Removed*, we have seen that they have failed to prove that Christians are to keep the Sabbath as the day of Christian worship. In our final article, we will note their summary of what they claim is “Bible evidence for their teaching.”

Deceased

Gideon's Faithful Few

R. L. Whiteside

Text: Judges 7:4-7, 15-21

And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and Jehovah said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And Jehovah said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place.... And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Israel, and said, Arise; for Jehovah hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp,

and say, For Jehovah and for Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put *them* to flight.

It is impossible to get the lesson of Gideon if we confine our study to the printed text of the lesson. The lesson really includes chapters 6, 7, and 8; the student should read carefully these chapters. When the angel said to Gideon, "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor," Gideon inquired, "Why then is all this befallen us?" (Jud. 6:12-13). Then after some preliminaries, Gideon gathered an army of thirty-two thousand. The law required certain preliminaries before going into battle (Deu. 20:1-9). The priest was to speak words of encouragement to the army. Then the officers were to announce to the army that anyone might return home who had built a new house and had not dedicated it, or who had planted a vineyard and had not eaten of its fruit, or who had betrothed a wife and had not married her. Especially were the fearful and the faint-hearted to return home, lest they

discourage the others. In Gideon's army, there were twenty-two thousand who were afraid to face the army of Midian. This left Gideon ten thousand. "And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many" (Jud. 7:4). He wanted the army so reduced in numbers that they could not say: "Mine own hand hath saved me." So, Jehovah gave orders and directions for another sifting at a certain water.

Verse 5 is somewhat obscure as to how the test for the fighting men was to be carried out, for men cannot lap water with the tongue as a dog laps. Verse 6 clears up the matter. The ones that lapped up water with their hands as a dog lapped water with his tongue were to be selected. These showed that they were alert and watchful. When there were enemies about, they were in a position to see that no one slipped up on them. They had trained themselves to this sort of watchfulness. The vast majority of the ten thousand dropped down on their hands and knees with their faces to the water to drink. They were not watchful. None of the army knew that he was being put to a prearranged test, and so each drank as he had been in the habit of doing. Only three hundred out of thirty-two thousand qualified for the task before them. Twenty-two thousand preferred to be oppressed by the Midianites rather than to fight them, so low had they sunk in manliness! Nine thousand seven hundred were not sufficiently watchful to be dependable.

Power and strength belong to Jehovah, and not to the majority of

people. "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you" (7:7), said Jehovah. But even so, the three hundred had to follow Jehovah's plans, or they would fail. It is a mistaken and hurtful notion that, because Jehovah saves, people, therefore, have nothing to do, or that, because a man tries to do what God says, he is trying to save himself independent of God. God saves through agencies and by means. To do exactly what God says to reach a certain end is to show the very highest degree of trust in God. For a man to turn from God's way to follow his own way is to trust himself instead of God. A failure to so trust God as to follow His ways had gotten Israel into this trouble. Through the prophet, God said to them: "But ye have not hearkened unto my voice" (6:10). Now if they would reverse their conduct and do as Jehovah directed, He would save them and deliver the Midianites into their hands.

Read Judges 7:8-14.

So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley. And it came to pass the same night, that Jehovah said unto him, Arise, get thee down into the camp; for I have delivered it into thy hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Purah thy servant down to the camp: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thy hands be strengthened to go down into the camp. Then went he down with Purah his servant unto the outermost part of the armed men that were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for

multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man telling a dream unto his fellow; and he said, Behold, I dreamed a dream; and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came unto the tent, and smote it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host.

The Midianites and associates had moved in on Israel with their families and all their stock. Not all were armed, but the armed men would encamp around the others for protection. At the command of Jehovah, Gideon went with his servant "unto the outermost part of the armed men that were in the camp" (7:11). It was night, and the multitude was asleep. Gideon approached near enough to a tent to hear one man tell a dream to another and heard the other interpret the dream. In the dream, a barley loaf had come tumbling into camp, struck a tent, and turned it upside down. The other said: "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host" (7:14). Both the dream and the interpretation were of God; yet, these men were enemies of God's people. There are other instances in which heathen men—men who did not believe in the one true God—dreamed prophetic dreams. While Joseph was in prison in Egypt, two of his fellow prisoners dreamed prophetic dreams, which Joseph in-

terpreted for them (Gen. 40). Then Pharaoh dreamed of seven fat kine which were eaten up by seven lean ones, and also of seven good ears on one stalk which were swallowed up by seven thin ears. These dreams troubled Pharaoh, but the magicians and wise men of Egypt could not interpret them. Then Joseph was brought from prison, and he gave the correct interpretation and declared to Pharaoh: "What God is about to do he hath showed unto Pharaoh" (41:1-32). Then there is Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which he saw a great image. The dream worried King Nebuchadnezzar, but his specialists could not tell him the dream and thereby showed that they could not interpret it. When Daniel was called, he gave the correct interpretation of the dream and told Nebuchadnezzar that God had made known to him what would be in the latter days (Dan. 2:1-45). As the interpretation of all these dreams was from God, so were the dreams. It is not for us to know the mysteries of the spiritual influences that caused these heathen men to dream prophetic dreams. In such matters, God's ways are past tracing out.

The three hundred men were divided into three companies, each man having a trumpet and a pitcher, with torches within the pitchers. No other army was ever so equipped—each man with a trumpet in one hand and a pitcher in the other! But Midian did not know this. No such equipment for an army could have originated in the mind of a man; Gideon was acting under the direction of Jehovah. When the companies were stationed about the camp of Midian, nothing was to be done until

Gideon gave the signal, and then each was to do as he did. "When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For Jehovah and for Gideon" (Jud. 7:18). These companies would not be stationed in compact groups but would be so strung out as to make it appear to Midian that the whole territory about their camp was full of enemies. They would naturally think that there was a company of men to each trumpet and that a signal to charge had been sounded. Being so suddenly roused out of deep sleep in the dead hours of the night by such an uproar, and seeing the lights all about them, they would be thrown into the wildest confusion. They would think that a great army was closing in on them from every side.

Gideon and his three hundred men had to move with the greatest caution lest the watchers discover them; the Midianites were

kept in total ignorance of what was going on. They knew, of course, that Gideon had an army not far away. When the three hundred men under Gideon had time to arrange themselves in their proper places, then suddenly on all sides of the camp of Midian trumpets were sounded, as if each trumpet was giving a signal for a charge. Then pitchers were broken, and suddenly torches flared up in all directions, and the suddenly awakened Midianites heard the shout: "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (7:20). Midian had no time to think; panic seized them; their officers had no chance to arrange their soldiers for battle, had they desired to do so. A vast throng of people in a panic do not think; they do not stop to reason or to plan anything. For the time being, they are crazy with fright. As they rushed about in the darkness of the night, unable to distinguish friend from

foe, each man that was met was feared to be an enemy; and, so, the Midianites made a great slaughter among themselves. "Jehovah set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the host" (7:21). Gideon and his men had nothing to do but to stand in their places and shout the war cry. (The student should not stop with the last verse of the printed text of the lesson.) Everyone of Midian that escaped the sword of his fellowman attempted to flee from the land of the children of Israel; they were completely disorganized. Men from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh pursued the retreating Midianites. Ephraim sought to cut them off from crossing the Jordan but did not stop all of them. They captured two princes, Oreb and Zeeb. The student should not stop until he has read to the end of this interesting narrative.

Deceased

Preaching and Baptizing

J. Roy Vaughan

A good man has said: "If you expect to baptize people, you must preach baptism." This, of course, is true. This truth is emphasized in the records of the early Gospel preachers. In every case of conversion given in detail in Acts, we find it recorded that the Gospel was preached, and people were baptized. In Acts 8, this fact is well illustrated. After the stoning of Stephen, the enemies of the church were emboldened to press the persecution of the church in Jerusalem. "And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, ex-

cept the apostles" (8:1). "They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ" (8:4-5). "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (8:12). In this chapter also we read of Philip preaching to the eunuch. Luke says: "Philip opened his mouth, and...preached unto him Jesus" (8:35). From these Scriptures we find they "preached the word,"

they preached "good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," they preached "the Christ," they preached "Jesus," and, finally, as Philip passed through the cities "he preached the gospel" (8:40). This was the burden of the message preached in that day, and it should be the same today if we expect to reap the same results.

As Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, as they rode along the way, "they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (8:36). Why do you suppose

the eunuch wanted to be baptized? Where did he learn about baptism? The answer is: He heard Philip preach Jesus. In preaching Jesus to this man, Philip preached baptism. He preached it in such a way as to make the man want to be baptized. He preached it as a part of the plan of salvation, and made the eunuch realize he should be baptized. When men today preach Jesus as Philip preached Jesus, those who hear them will also learn their duty and want to be baptized. However, we cannot expect the people to be baptized when preachers are ashamed and afraid to preach baptism. No man preaches Christ as did the early evangelists until he also preaches baptism as a part of the plan of salvation.

According to the King James Version and the marginal reading of the American Standard Version, Philip said: *“If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (8:37). This is the good confession (1 Tim. 6:12). This is the confession Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate (6:13). This is the confession that should **precede baptism**. Philip did not ask the eunuch if he felt good, nor did he ask him if he believed that God for Christ’s sake had saved him, nor do we read in the Bible of any preacher asking such questions before baptism. Yet, how often we hear people trying to answer these questions and hear preachers asking them, rather than the simple confession made by the eunuch. Indeed, it is alarming how far people have moved from the simple truth in so many ways. They do not read the Bible, and put too much confidence in preachers, and too many preachers are more willing to preach some tradition or creed of men than the simple truth. Some de-

nominal preachers cannot stop along beside the road today, as did Philip and the eunuch, and baptize a man upon the simple confession of his faith in Christ. It is impossible to follow the practice of the early evangelists and apostles and at the same time follow the creeds of the denominations.

This confession the eunuch made also raises a question regarding the validity of the baptism of some people who were baptized by a Methodist, Baptist, or some other sectarian preacher. Sometimes they will claim that in their heart they understand that baptism is **in order to** salvation, and not, as we know was in the heart of the preacher, because of salvation. But they confessed, not that Jesus is the Son of God (as did the eunuch), but that they believe that God for Christ’s sake had already saved them before they were baptized. They either did not understand the confession they made, or they did not understand that **baptism is in order to the remission of sins**. If they did not understand the confession, there is a strong probability that they did not understand why they were baptized. Men should think soberly about these things. It is not a mere matter of proving a point, but salvation is at stake. Preachers should be slow to encourage men to rely on their sectarian baptism. They should make the man realize that it is his soul to be saved or lost, and that he alone must make the decision. No preacher should make himself a judge in such matters. It is but his to teach the truth and insist that the truth be obeyed. Nevertheless, should one conscientiously contend that he has obeyed the truth, no man has authority to condemn the man. Preachers should remember that

God has not put them in the rejecting business any more than they are in the receiving business, lest they be guilty as are those who vote on their candidates before baptism. It is the Lord who adds to the church (Acts 2:47).

From the conversion of the eunuch we also find that both the preacher and the eunuch went down into the water; and having baptized the eunuch, they came up out of the water. It would seem that this example should be sufficient to convince any honest heart that baptism is a **burial** in water. Certainly, wisdom does not dictate going down into the water and coming up out of the water when only a few drops of water are necessary for sprinkling! If it be contended that this baptism was a burial, but that it does not prove that some of the people were not sprinkled—that both sprinkling and immersion were practiced in those days—then let a single example of sprinkling for baptism be found in the Bible. Until at least one example of sprinkling for baptism can be cited in the Scriptures, and it is admitted that a burial in water is baptism, we must conclude that a burial only constituted baptism in the days of the apostles.

After his baptism the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Even in this, modern theology is in reverse. Many people tell us that they “get saved,” and they know they are saved because they feel good. But it was not that way with the eunuch. He did not go down the road telling people he knew he was saved because he felt good and rejoiced, but he rejoiced because he knew he was saved. The knowledge of salvation was the source of his joy. Even so be it today.

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Is Ten Commandment Law Still Binding? (Part 8)

Ken Chumbley

The authors of the book, *Ten Commandments Twice Removed*, in Chapter Nine state: “Let’s review some of the Bible evidence we’ve studied so far to help explain why we should not forget what was created for our benefit, what God asked us to remember.” In this concluding article in our series we will review each of the points they raise as “Bible evidence” in their attempt to bind the Sabbath on Christians.

1. God instituted the Sabbath at Creation—He blessed and sanctified the seventh day. This is the only supporting reason for our weekly time cycle (Gen. 2:2-3).

It is true that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day and that the reason for His doing so was because He had rested from His creative work. However, there is no command given for man to observe the seventh-day Sabbath nor is there any example of Adam or his descendants observing the Sabbath as a day of worship.

2. God made the Sabbath for the benefit of mankind (Mark 2:27). Adam and Eve were the only people in the Garden of Eden. If God made the Sabbath for them, they obviously observed and enjoyed their Sabbaths

with Him. Most especially after their fateful fall. Sabbaths were the day they could cease from their sentence of hard labor and, once again, rest in their Redeemer.

Again, there is no indication that Adam and Eve or their descendants observed the seventh-day Sabbath as a day of worship. The statements of the authors are simple assumptions made by them without Biblical support. The context of Mark 2:27 concerns the abuses of the Sabbath by the Pharisees whereby they bound their traditions concerning working on the Sabbath—and then prohibited even gathering of corn for eating on the Sabbath day, as the disciples had done. Christ was dealing with the binding of these traditions and had no reference to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath.

3. Abraham and his descendants kept all of God’s commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath (Gen. 26:4-5).

The authors here **assume** that Sabbath day worship was included in the commandments that Abraham and his descendants observed. Such cannot rightly be affirmed from the text. Further, if Abraham and his descendants were observing

the Sabbath then the inspired Moses made an error as he recorded the words of God:

The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even* us, who *are* all of us here alive this day.... And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day (Deu. 5:3, 15).

Abraham was not a “servant in the land of Egypt” nor were his descendants until much later—when a Pharaoh arose that “knew not Joseph” (Exo. 1:8-14).

4. God required Moses and the children of Israel to keep His Sabbath law before He handed down the Ten Commandments (16:4, 26-30).

The context shows that this had to do with the miraculous provision of the manna that was to be provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness. These instructions were given “on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt” (16:1). When was the Ten Commandment law that included the Sabbath given?

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Notes From The Editor

**Michael
Hatcher**

Email address:
mhatcher@gmail.com

Weeping

Weep in its basic meaning is to “shed tears” or “to express deep sorrow for usually by shedding tears.” Weeping is a natural emotion that comes as a result of great sadness. There are many other words that we use as synonyms for weep: cry, sob, lament, mourn, moan, etc. What causes the weeping is, obviously, not inherent in the word itself. Weeping and lamentation was a vital part of ancient Semitic life and our life as well. During the Old Testament times, we often read of individuals and entire nations wearing sackcloth (a coarse material) along with putting ashes on the head or sitting on a heap of ashes. While in this short article, we do not have the space to go into a detailed study of this subject, I would like for us to consider a few aspects of what people wept over.

There are various times in which people lamented over Jerusalem. Jeremiah wrote an entire book, Lamentations, over the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army. Jeremiah weeps over the condition of Jerusalem and the people. One telling statement he makes is: “For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, Because the comforter that should re-

lieve my soul is far from me: My children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed” (Lam. 1:16).

Jesus wept (even though the term is not specifically used) over the condition of Jerusalem in His day because they rejected Him. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Mat. 23:37). He goes on to discuss the destruction of the city in the first part of Matthew 24.

In both of these laments, the physical city was destroyed but it was because of their sin and wickedness. The Israelites long looked for and anticipated Messiah had been sent and they rejected Him: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Jesus had exposed their sins, hypocrisy, and wickedness (even as the prophets had before Him), and their refusal to repent resulted in their destruction.

Many weep today because of the condition of our nation. The sins that so abounds in our nation is appalling. The most vile and corrupt immoral acts known to man are openly flaunted and glorified in our society. Israel of old has nothing on our society today as far as immorality is concerned. We have become an amoral nation. We should be weeping over what is taking place. However, we have become so accustomed to the vile speech, immodesty, immorality, materialism, ungodliness, fornication and adultery, and the list could go on and on, that we are no longer shocked by it but simply accept it. We have become so conditioned by

an evil society that those things that would have one time been totally unacceptable to us are now commonplace to us. We have become like Israel of old when Isaiah placed a curse upon them: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20). Jeremiah later asked the question, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD” (Jer. 6:15). Thus, today far too few weep over what is taking place in our nation (and other nations).

Likewise, there should be weeping today over the condition of the church of Christ. The church of Christ is the one church (Eph. 4:4) Jesus built (Mat. 16:18), over which He is head (Eph. 1:22-23), and which He is going to save (5:23). Sadly, these simple principles are rejected by many who claim to be members of the Lord’s church. There are the claims made that the church of Christ is simply a denomination among denominations. Many look more toward those of the American Restoration Movement and see the beginnings of the

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

church of Christ there than they do the writings of Peter, Paul, Luke, John, Matthew, Mark, James, and Jude. We have been infiltrated by those coming from the denominations but never devoid themselves of their denominational thoughts and actions. They have brought their denominational ideas regarding the work of the church: saving souls by preaching to the lost, edifying those who are saved, and benevolent activity (to both saint and non-saint). They have turned the Lord's work into fun and games. Instead of directing our attention outward, we have turned our attention inward to ourselves. We have allowed ourselves to be turned from saving souls to nonsense like saving the planet and the social ills of our society. One brother immediately after the death of George Floyd commented that if your preacher and congregation did not mention George Floyd in their previous worship service, people needed to leave that congregation and find another one (don't bother to allow facts and evidence to come out and actually see what would take place). This brother has been infected with the wickedness of turning the church into a club that attempts to solve the social ills of society instead of its design by God in saving souls.

Denominational brethren (brethren *converted* from denominational groups who retain their denominational thoughts) have likewise brought in numerous errors affecting every aspect of our worship to God. They slowly (or quickly in some cases) paved the way for using instrumental music into the church by making the voice sound like instruments, beatboxing, praise teams, etc. Is it any

wonder that more and more congregations see nothing wrong with mechanical instruments and then bring them into the worship assembly? Worship became more about entertaining me than worshipping God. Prayer has been perverted to the Catholic ideas of praying to someone other than the Father—whether it be to Christ, the Spirit, or someone else (many now advocate the propriety of praying to Jesus particularly). At one time we recognized that “upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread” (Acts 20:7) was the only authorized day to partake of the Lord's Supper. Now it is common to see *brethren* partake the communion on any day of the week and for any reason. Preaching, as was done by Paul in Acts 20:7, has been changed from “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), to entertain others by short stories, philosophy, and just about anything other than God's Word. Sound doctrine and those who preach such are not welcome in most pulpits of our day.

They have even brought over denominational plans of salvation. We have had *brethren* teaching that we are saved by grace alone or 100% grace then having others state we are saved by faith alone. (Many changed the denominational term *only* to *alone* apparently to make it more palatable to the church.) We have been taught that as long as one is baptized they are saved, even if they did not know the reason God gave for being baptized: salvation. Repentance has been almost completely thrown down the drain. Any type of “sorrow of the world” (2 Cor. 7:10) is fine with most brethren today. One can become a *Christian* without

making any changes whatsoever in their life.

The morality in the world has affected the church and degraded the morality God expects. Those things found in the world, eventually make their way into denominational groups and finally into the Lord's church.

During Eli's time, his daughter-in-law was going to have a baby, but Israel was at war with the Philistines. They brought the ark of the covenant to the battleground thinking that God would never allow it to be taken. They lost the battle, the ark was taken, and the two sons of Eli died in the battle. When Eli heard the ark had been taken, he fell over backward in his chair, broke his neck, and died. This also precipitated Phinehas' wife to give birth. The Record states, “And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken” (1 Sam. 4:21-22). This same name, Ichabod, could be given to many, if not most of the congregations of the church today. The glory of the church has departed because of sin within the camp and such sin that is allowed freely to remain.

Another aspect of weeping that I wanted to mention deals with death. Because of the nature of our close ties with others, when they pass from this life, great emotions well up within us. We weep over their deaths. There have been some through the years that have objected to our weeping the death of a loved one who was a Christian. It came as a result of a misunderstanding of what Paul writes, “But I

would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 The. 4:13). They reason since the Christian does have hope, we should not sorrow. However, Paul is not saying that we do not sorrow at all but is making a comparison between those who have hope and those who do not have hope. We both sorrow, however, the sorrow is different between the two based upon the hope one has or does not have. When Stephen was stoned to

death, Luke records, “And devout men carried Stephen to *his burial*, and made great lamentation over him” (Acts 8:2). There was great sorrow even though Stephen did “have hope.” Yes, we weep over the loss of a loved one but we weep in relation to us and realizing that the Christian will live on “and to be with Christ” (Phi. 1:23) and be able to spend eternity in heaven with God and the faithful of all time. To have this hope, we must obey the commands God gave to become a Christian (upon one’s faith, repent

of his sins, confess that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, be baptized in water for the remission of sins), then live as God has authorized in His Word. Then when death comes for that Christian, they will truly be blessed: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13), and while we will sorrow, we will not weep as those who have no hope.

MH

Continued from Page 1

It was less than one month later (Exo. 19-20). There is no indication that Moses and the children of Israel were commanded to observe the Sabbath in Exodus 16, but the people were told to get two days’ supply on the sixth day as there would be none available on the seventh day.

5. God reinforced His Ten Commandments—in stone, with His own finger—to magnify their divine moral priority to the children of Israel, who had lost evidence of their essential nature over four hundred years of captivity. He placed special emphasis on remembering His seventh-day Sabbath (20:8-11).

Yes, “God reinforced His Ten Commandments—in stone, with His own finger—to magnify their divine moral priority to the children of Israel.” However, the authors of the book **refuse** to acknowledge that these were given only to the children of Israel, not to the Gentiles or their forefathers (Deu. 5:3, 15). Thus, this does not provide evidence that men today are commanded to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

6. Jesus—King of kings and Lord of lords—provided a pattern for us. While on earth as the Son of Man, He made it His custom to keep each Sabbath by attending worship services (Luke 4:16).

Yes, it was the custom of the Lord to keep the Sabbath since He lived under the old covenant. Had He not done so, He would not have kept the Law perfectly and fulfilled it. Such observance by the Lord offers no evidence that Christians are to observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

7. When Jesus prophesied about events that would take place forty years after His death (AD 70, the destruction of Jerusalem), He underscored the fact that His followers would still be observing His sacred weekly Sabbath day (Mat. 24:20).

The passage does not give any indication that the followers of Christ “would still be observing His sacred weekly Sabbath day.” It only indicates that the gates of the city would be closed on the Sabbath Day. They would have been closed on that day because the Jews were still observing the Sabbath according to the tradi-

tions of the Jews that would have commanded the gates to remain shut.

8. Jesus said He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fill it to the fullest spiritual meaning. He emphatically declared that not one “jot or tittle” would be changed until heaven and earth pass away (5:17-18).

The statement: “He emphatically declared that not one “jot or tittle” would be changed until heaven and earth pass away” is a gross misinterpretation of the text. What Jesus said was that was no “jot or tittle” would pass until the Law was fulfilled. In verse 17, Jesus emphatically declared that He came to “fulfill” the Law. He fulfilled the Law by His death on the cross when He declared “It is finished” (John 19:30) thus taking it out of the way (Col. 2:14).

9. Christ’s disciples kept the Sabbath after the Crucifixion (Luke 23:56; Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 18:4). There’s no mention in the New Testament (written up to sixty years after Christ’s death) of changing or eliminating the seventh-day

Sabbath.

Luke 23:56 speaks of the women resting on the Sabbath immediately following the death of Christ and before His resurrection and before the disciples had been commissioned to preach the Gospel (24:6-49). Not one of the references in the book of Acts shows Christians engaging in Christian worship on the Sabbath. All they show is that they went where the people were assembled, under the Old Covenant (in the synagogue or the place of prayer) to preach the Gospel to them. What is necessary to prove that Christians are to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath is **one** passage that shows that Christians met for New Testament worship on that day. Such **cannot** be found. However, Scripture **does** show Christians assembling on the first day of the week and engaging in acts of Christian worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

10. The Old Covenant contained the Ten Commandments (Exo. 24:4, 7-8; Deu. 31:24-26).

Yes, the “Old Covenant contained the Ten Commandments.” That is not in dispute, that is not the issue, and proves nothing.

11. The New Covenant contains

the Ten Commandments (Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8, 10).

This statement does not offer evidence to prove the authors’ case but offers evidence to the contrary. Jeremiah 31:32 states: “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers In the day *that* I took them by the hand To bring them out of the land of Egypt; Which my covenant they brake, Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.” This shows that the New Covenant was not to be the same as the old one, the one that included that Sabbath command given only to the Jews (Deu. 5:3, 15). The passage in Hebrews is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-32). Note, however, the authors do not reference Hebrews 8:9 that quotes Jeremiah 31:32 showing the New Covenant was not the same as the old.

12. All flesh—all of God’s redeemed people—will celebrate the Sabbath in the new heavens and new earth for all of eternity (Isa. 66:22-23). If this prophetic passage is speaking of Christians worshipping on the Sabbath, then it also has them worshipping every new moon. Are the authors of the book willing to affirm such? Further, Paul writes:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Col. 2:16). Thus, Paul states we are not to be judged regarding keeping the new moon or the Sabbath. Further, when we examine closely Isaiah 66:22-23, the language indicates the concept that in the heavenly realm the redeemed will be worshipping God, not on the new moon or the Sabbath but constantly—from one to the other. A similar concept is expressed by John in Revelation 5 and 7.

We have reviewed the twelve points offered as “Bible evidence” for the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath and find that each one is lacking that necessary “evidence.” Thus, the authors’ case is not proved. We also pointed out, briefly, in this review some Bible evidence for Christians engaging in Christian worship on the first day of the week, Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Truly, the Ten Commandment Law is a part of that which was nailed to the cross and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14), and therefore, including the fourth command, the Sabbath command is not bound upon Christians.

Deceased

Are You a Disciple Under-Developed (DUD)?

Gary W. Summers

Too often it happens that someone desires to avoid hell and gain the promise of heaven; so, they are baptized and somehow think that this action is sufficient to save them regardless of what else they do or do not do. Even though they have been taught about being added to the church and becoming a working part of a local congregation, they remain aloof. Even though they have

been taught about the Lord’s expectation of spiritual growth on their part, they do not grow. Many remain under-developed and may not even know it. Below, then, is a test to determine if you are a D.U.D.

True — False. “I care more about what a congregation has to offer me and my family than what all of us can bring to the church.” If you honestly answered true, have you

ever thought that, perhaps, your attitude leans toward selfishness? The church consists of members who are people just like you. If everyone had the attitude that you have, there would be no programs of any kind because everybody would be waiting for someone else to do something. The only way anything gets done is through volunteers who have a commitment to their Lord

and to the well-being of the local congregation. By working together, we function as the body of Christ should (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

True — False. “If there are not any children that are my children’s age, I will try to find a larger congregation.” If everyone had the same attitude, wouldn’t that pretty much ensure that small congregations would remain small and large congregations would stay large? Have you ever thought that if you stayed with your family, the next family who came would be more likely to stay since your children were there? If no one takes the first step to build up the youth population, how will it ever happen? Have you not thought of the idea that you could work to bring other young people who know your children? Your family could be a catalyst rather than a disappointment.

True — False. “I make encouraging comments to others to help build them up and keep my negative comments to myself.” If that is false, you are not helping. It is not that there is no need for constructive criticism. Taking people aside to vent your complaints does not contribute to the esprit de corps of the congregation, and it makes you look bad. “I didn’t like the song leading today,” “the prayer was too long,” or “the sermons just don’t move me” may indicate that the crux of the problem is with you—not those leading in worship. Have you thought about making a positive suggestion to any of the leaders instead of whispering behind their backs?

True — False. “People in the congregation don’t pay enough attention to me.” If you answered true, why is that, do you suppose?

How often have you made an encouraging phone call to other brethren? Have you prepared food for others when they were ill or visited them in the hospital? Have you offered to mow someone’s lawn while he was recovering from a sprained ankle or broken leg? Have you asked yourself why you expect to receive kindness if you have never shown any (Pro. 18:24)?

True — False. “I am more of a positive influence than a problem.” If you can be depended upon each week to be present for worship and to participate in the various activities of the congregation (unless illness prevents you), may your tribe increase. If it is false, should you not determine to do better? People should not have to leave worship each week wondering where brother absent and sister sluggish are. Elders must give account for the souls of the members. Do you make it easy or difficult for them (Heb. 13:17)? If they were discussing your absence, would they be saying, “We’d better call him immediately; he never misses worship” or “That’s the third absence this month; what else is new?” Are you an asset or a liability?

What Is a Disciple?

According to the Scriptures, certain things are to be true of those who are disciples of Christ. It is simply stated in Matthew 8:23: “Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.” The key word is followed. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, a disciple is a “person who subscribes to the teachings of a master and assists in spreading them.” In other words, he is a follower and evangelistic (by definition). The contrapositive form

of this statement (which is always true) is: “He who does **not** follow what his master teaches and does **not** help to spread those teachings is **not** a disciple.”

It is important to note what Jesus taught His followers in Matthew 10:24-25a: “A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.” What are the implications of these words? When a disciple is being taught, he may have questions about teachings he does not fully understand; so, he asks questions for clarification. What he does not do, however, is disagree. He cannot place his opinions and judgments above his master’s—first because he is a follower, and, second, because the master is wiser than the pupil.

Therefore, non-involvement with the church is not an option. The brethren at Corinth had a lot of problems, but this one was not one of them. They were eager to be present to worship—and just as eager to be the center of attention by exercising their spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). They were rude to each other and divisive, and these problems had to be corrected. However, they were not apathetic and lazy. They were true disciples, as shown by the corrections that they made when Paul rebuked them for their errors. They improved themselves from being very imperfect to gaining a level of maturity.

Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together is not the mark of a disciple. How can one be a learner if he is not present to be edified? How can one assist in spreading the teachings of Christ if he does not first know them himself? Further-

more, how can one be a disciple when he does not practice what his master taught? Jesus exercised compassion on the sick, healing them wherever He went. Today, Christians do not have the ability to heal, but they can still express compassion on those who have various needs (Mat. 25:21-46).

Your goal, then, is not to disagree with your Master, but to follow Him. Not doing what He taught is not only foolish (7:21-27), it is dangerous and indicates that you are not a disciple at all. As Luke records, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). While genuine disciples know that at times, they will fall short of the goals the Lord has set before them, they must also realize that they cannot just ignore them and still be called disciples.

Besides following Jesus and not disagreeing with Him, discipleship involves other elements. First is **commitment** (14:26-33). The time to make that decision is at the point of initial obedience. Yes, Jesus wants to give you salvation, but He expects commitment out of you, also. You do not find that in many “sinner’s prayers.” Those concocted salvation promises were invented by men, not God, and are barely more than slogans. Most of them say nothing of repentance, although a few do. All of them omit baptism, which the Scriptures never do, and none of them say anything about commitment or counting the cost in becoming a disciple. Those statements have no other goal in mind than to try to impart salvation cheaply. They are disgraceful and an insult to the Holy Spirit who in-

spired the New Testament! God is interested in those who diligently seek Him—not those who passively and momentarily want salvation.

Second, a disciple is one who **continues in the Word** of the Master (John 8:31-32). No one becomes a follower of Jesus by displaying a casual interest in spiritual concerns. One must read the teachings of Christ, meditate upon them, think about their meaning, and then walk and abide in them (1 John 1:7). There are no shortcuts to spiritual growth.

An absolute requirement, third, is **meeting with the saints for worship**, as is described in Acts 20:7 and required in Hebrews 10:25. A young disciple needs to be taught by those who are older in the faith and encouraged by his older brothers and sisters. A true disciple does not say (unless a health issue is involved), “Shall I go to worship this morning or stay home and catch up on sleep or various projects?” To intentionally determine to be somewhere else or do something else is to disagree with the Master who built the church and is Head over it (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23).

True disciples, fourth, have **love for one another** (John 13:34-35). But how can that love be expressed if you isolate yourself from the assemblies and activities of the church? A great many things can happen in a week’s time. The one who misses a couple of Lord’s days may have missed a great deal. How embarrassing it is to be one of few who do not know (due to willful absences) of a serious medical condition that has befallen a brother or sister! You cannot exercise the proper love and care for your

brethren if you choose to be absent when all the other brethren are meeting.

Fifth, Jesus expects **certain actions** on the part of His disciples; He said: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8). Bearing fruit is not accidental; it results from purposeful efforts. It results from the spreading of the Master’s teachings. Other people may decide to become Christians based on what they see in your life and what they read in the Scriptures. You cannot convert others if you yourself are lukewarm and uncommitted. You cannot afford to be a stumbling block to another (Luke 17:1-2); you must walk as closely with God as you can.

A Disciple Under Development (Excellent!), (DUDE)

The good news is that you do not have to be a DUD; you can go from being a DUD to a DUDE. Everyone has free will, and God has given you the time to repent! If you have grown slack in your worship and service of Him, why not determine to become a disciple all over again? It may be that you once had a strong determination to love Jesus, your Lord, but over time, and confronted by various problems, you allowed yourself to slip (Heb. 2:1-4). Do not become complacent! Hell is still hot, and heaven makes a much better eternal dwelling place. Sin is just as real as it was when you first obeyed the Gospel, and you are still in need of salvation from it. Repent and become a disciple again. There remains much work to do in the kingdom!

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