

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

Vol. LIV

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August

November

March

June

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Diotrephes and His Kind

Lester Kamp

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church (3 John 9-10).

No more than that which is contained in these two verses is known about this man Diotrephes. Whether he was an elder or not we are not told. The case of Diotrephes is “an illustration of the bad influence of one ambitious and arrogant man in a church. It is often in the power of one such man to bring a whole church under his control, and effectually to embarrass all its movements, and to prevent all the good which it would otherwise accomplish” (*Barnes Notes*). His desire was to rule by whatever means. He wanted the congregation. He desired to determine who would preach and, therefore, what would be preached. In his own mind, his way was more important than any other way—including the Lord’s way. The desire to keep the church

pure may have been his stated purpose, but the reality was that he may have had some secret dislike for John or some private grudge. The real truth was that he did not want the “interference” of even an inspired apostle in determining the course of the church where he was. He loved to have the preeminence! The local congregation was under his influence.

He may have accomplished this dominance in the congregation in a variety of ways. It is possible that Diotrephes was a man of wealth. He may have been a very “big giver,” and he made sure that the rest of the congregation knew what he gave and how much the work of the congregation depended on his *generosity*. Money talks so loudly to so many! (Jesus’ words show the reality of such giving: “But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly”: Mat. 6:3-4—In fact, earlier, Jesus had stated that those who give to be seen of men have received their only reward when others “see” their gifts.)

He may have obtained his heavy hand by his *hospitality*. He may have had many in his home and shown them a wonderful time. Everyone likes to be liked. Everyone likes to be entertained. But sometimes good things are used for evil purposes, and Diotrephes may have used such occasions to achieve loyalty to him and his ideas. He may have been able, through *church politics*, in these circumstances to garner his own followers impressed with his *graciousness*. Many evil works are initiated privately. The political maneuvering necessary to achieve his place of prominence likely took place in private settings. Those influenced by him may not have recognized his behavior as being a means to the end of accomplishing his own preeminence. He seemed like such a likeable fellow and so concerned about the church.

He may have used “good words and fair speeches” (Rom. 16:18). He may have read from the comments of good, righteous men to make some valid points in his discussions of Scripture. He may have impressed many with his reading and wisdom because he seemed to

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Introduction

The New Testament uses many figures relating to the blood-bought church that Christ purchased by shedding His blood on the cross (Acts 20:28). A few examples would be that it describes the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5), the house (or household) of God or family of God (1 Tim. 3:15), God's husbandry (1 Cor. 3:9), the kingdom of God (Mat. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13), the temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16), the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23) along with other figures. While many of these are a joy to speak of and discuss, one figure that seems to be seldom talked about today is that the church is the army of God.

This view of the church is so vastly different than what many envision the church to be. Many people view the church more of a glorified social club, a club whereby contacts and friends are made and where social activities are planned and carried out. While the church does have social value as it is God's society of mutual love and edification as we traverse this world into the next, the church is not simply a social club. These are congregations who will build gymnasiums or "family life centers," and provide entertainment for the young people to cater to their social activities.

Closely related to this is the view the church is a social institution to right the wrongs of society. Their main concern is the ills of society and not sin and reconciliation with God. These are the kind of *churches* you will find involved in politics, pollution (air, water), poverty, nuclear armaments and the arms race, supposed discrimination (often major supporters of DEI), aging, and such like. These views have made their way into the Lord's church where we now hear that we (our main goal or aim) is to "meet the needs of the people" (as some have taken surveys of the community asking them what they want from a church and then try to provide what they wish). These congregations provide seminars for financial planning, job search, depression, how to cope with aging, alcoholism, dealing with death, and the list goes on and on.

There are those who view the church as a conglomeration of all the denominations in the world. With this view one has succumbed to the thought that "one church is as good as another," and "we are all going the same place, just taking different routes." The church becomes unimportant, and one can be saved without being a member of it. The church of Christ is nothing more than a denomination among denominations. However, one person said:

A denomination is a religious body with extra-Biblical peculiarities distinguishing it from the church or religious body revealed in the Bible. It is utterly impossible for any denomination to exist without believing something, doing something, being something, saying something, or having something that is not in the Word of God. All denominations teach more or less of what

is in the Bible; but the things they teach that are in the Bible do not make them denominations.

The church of Christ is not a denomination and is opposed to any and all such. The church is made up of all the saved (Acts 2:41, 47; Eph. 5:23). The work of the church is saving souls (not the planet or society's ills). Thus, it is a spiritual work, not a physical one (John 18:36; Luke 19:10).

So, the Lord's church is a Divine institution, and as such, is described by God as an army of Christ. While armies might do various things, its basic function is to fight. Therefore, the Bible sets forth the marching orders for the church. Paul writes, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). He goes on to tell Timothy that in this good warfare, he is to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (6:12). As he writes his second letter to Timothy, he encourages him, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). As he ends this second letter, Paul reflects back on his life and says, "I have fought a good

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith” (4:7). Paul did what Jude exhorted brethren to do as he wrote, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Since the Bible likens the church to an army (Rev. 19:14-16) and individual Christians as soldiers

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(2 Tim. 2:3), there are many principles outlined in the Scriptures that the church and Christians should possess. After briefly looking at the marks of a great soldier and a great army, I would like to direct our attention to one army in particular, i.e., David’s army.

A Great Soldier

To be a great soldier, one must first be in the army. It is certainly possible to perform some of the functions of a soldier without being in an army, and he might do them well. However, the usual connotation of the word indicates that for one to be a soldier he must be in the army; he must be part of the team as in warfare it takes great teamwork to accomplish great things. Being part of a team, soldiers must fight together and not against each other. In the Lord’s church, we have far too many that are biting and devouring each other (Gal. 5:15). We must learn to fight together, not against each other recognizing we are “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1). We are to have the unity Christ prayed for in John 17:20-21, a unity based upon the Word of God. It is a unity that will cause us to have the same mind, speak the same thing, and have the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). Of course, when one becomes a traitor to the Truth and teaches false doctrine, they have destroyed that unity so we cannot work with or aid that traitor (Rom. 16:17).

However, being in **an** army is not sufficient; one must be in the **right** army. There are many who are zealous who think they are in the right army when they are not (Rom 10:2). Satan does his best to deceive the world (Rev. 12:9;

13:14). Satan will even appear as an angel of light and his ministers as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:13-15) to deceive people and deceive people they do. We are told that many will follow their pernicious ways (2 Pet. 2:2). These are in **an** army, but it is the army of the devil, not Christ’s army. To be in Christ’s army, one must obey the Gospel, and he must live faithfully.

When soldiers leave the barracks, they must also be in the right uniform. During a time of war, it is generally a court-martial offense to leave the barracks out of uniform. They know the important of the right uniform. In this spiritual battle, we are either in the uniform of Christ or the uniform of the devil (Mat. 12:30) and are under Christ’s marching orders (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:18). Upon our obedience to Christ in baptism we are added to Christ’s army (Acts 2:47), and we put on the uniform of Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27). Paul aptly describes the Christian’s uniform in Ephesians 6:10-18 in putting on the whole armor of God.

Being in an army necessitates being properly trained. When one enters the military, he is sent to basic training where he learns all the fundamentals the soldier must know in a period of intense training. After basic training there are then specialized schools to learn specific jobs. Likewise, when one becomes a Christian, he must be trained well. Our spiritual warfare has just one offensive weapon, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). We must learn to use the Bible as anything else is folly. Our weapon is mighty (2 Cor. 10:3-4) and described as a powerful, sharp, two-

edged sword (Heb. 4:12). If a Christian cannot use that one weapon well, he would be a poor soldier. Our training to use that marvelous weapon is from a study of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15).

Soldiers go to where the battle is being fought—the frontlines of the battle. How can one be a truly great soldier if he never goes to the battlefield and fights? We must have Christians who are willing to go to the battlefield and fight the forces of Satan. We need elders who will lead the congregation in learning the truth and a knowledge of the enemy. They need to demand strong, bold preaching of God's Word, exposing, and rebuking Satan and his forces. We need preachers who are less professional pulpiteers and more like the prophets of old. They need to declare all the council of God and do so with boldness (Acts 20:27; 4:29;

Eph. 6:19-20). This army of God needs the rank-and-file members who support the bold preaching of the Truth and those who preach it as it should be done then getting out and spreading God's Word (teaching others the Gospel) into the world.

A good soldier must obey the orders of his commander. A part of basic training is to learn to obey without question and obey immediately. In the army of Christ, we must obey our Commander. James teaches us, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam. 4:7). In the process of being a Christian, our Commander in Chief demands that we repent (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38). Repentance is a change in thinking and attitude toward sin and God. This change will cause us to stop doing what is contrary to God's will and

start doing what He wants us to do. In giving what is the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His apostles to go make disciples of all nations (Mat. 28:19-20). The basis upon which He gives that commission is that He has all authority or power (28:18). The making of a disciple is accomplished by baptizing (into a relationship with the Divine Three), and "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Thus, those entering the army of Christ must learn to obey without question and immediately the orders of their Superior, Jesus the Christ.

These are some marks of a good soldier of the Messiah. In our next installment, we will notice some marks of a great army before looking at the men who came to David to comprise his army.

MH

Continued from Page 1
know so much about so many Biblical topics. He made sure that others knew how many he knew in the brotherhood and how many books he had in his own library. He would, in fact, on many occasions bring these books and read from them in classes and on other occasions so everyone could see. Some people are impressed by books and someone who can express wisdom even when that wisdom was written by someone else.

John does not tell us how Diotrephes had risen to his place of influence, but the methods suggested above have been used by Diotrephes' kind in generations since John wrote. The Diotrephes

that John addressed is certainly not the only one within the church who has loved to have the preeminence. There are far too many of his kind in the church today in far too many places.

John tells us that he was "prating against us with malicious words." *Prating* suggests the use of many words. He was speaking incessantly against John and others who proclaimed the Truth. The fact that what Diotrephes was saying were "malicious words" indicates that he was trying to injure John by undermining his influence and injuring his character. Diotrephes tried to make himself look better by destroying the character of John. John and the others who pro-

claimed the same message of Truth were a threat to Diotrephes. He feared exposure (see John 3:19-20), and he feared the loss of his influence. He did not want anyone to listen to John and the others. He used his influence to forbid the brethren from receiving proclaimers of Truth and cast out the brethren who would receive them. Of course, he did not reveal his real motives to the brethren. He would suggest that he was merely trying to protect the church and trying to keep it pure.

John did not look favorably upon Diotrephes. John said, "If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth." John was going to deal directly with this one who at-

tempted to control that congregation. The problem here was not false doctrine in the sense of teaching error; the problem was the acceptance of false authority—the authority of a mere man had superseded the authority of Christ. The congregation had become the “church of Diotrephes” and not the church of Christ. The preeminence

in the church that was purchased by the blood of Christ belongs only to Him. “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

It is just as damnable to follow the wrong authority (the authority of a man or men) as it is to follow

and/or teach false doctrine! Paul wrote, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). Let us follow Christ and not allow Diotrephes and his kind to lead us astray.

Aurora CO

Our Allegiance Belongs to God

Marvin Weir

The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines *allegiance* as follows: “the fidelity owed by a subject or citizen to a sovereign or government; devotion or loyalty to a person, group, or cause.” The Bible teaches that Christians have a Sovereign (Jehovah God) to which their allegiance belongs. The Lord makes this very clear in saying to the lawyer who questioned Him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mat. 22:37). To state it another way, this means that commitment, allegiance, devotion, and loyalty to God must take priority over myself or any other person or institution. Regrettably, many Christians today have forgotten to whom their allegiance belongs! Let us look at some areas where men fail when their allegiance to God is put to the test.

First, **allegiance to one’s family often takes priority over everything else.** Many brethren evidently believe that the Bible’s purpose is to instruct, rebuke, and discipline every member except a member of their family. A double standard is thus created, and inconsistency in applying the Word of God abounds. No Christian is

“above” God’s truths! The Old Testament emphatically states, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” It is obvious that practicing “respect of persons” to one involved in sin becomes a sinful practice (Jam. 2:9). The devil is a master at setting snares with things that are most precious to us.

Quite often parents defend their children who have chosen to live in sin. Or, it may be an aunt, an uncle, a cousin, niece, or nephew who has gone astray. Families do and should love other members of their family, but this love is not to exceed their love for God! The Lord has a stern warning for families: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat. 10:37). Adam Clarke taught the following regarding this verse:

He whom we love the most is he whom we study most to please, and whose will and interests we prefer in all cases. If, in order to please a father or mother who are opposed to vital godliness, we abandon God’s ordinances and followers, we are unworthy of anything but hell.

Brethren, it matters not **who** it is that commits sin—the Scriptures apply equally to all!

Second, **allegiance to one’s friends** follows fast on the heels of allegiance to one’s family. I have grown weary in recent years listening to brethren seeking to justify their fellowship with a liberal congregation saying, “I don’t approve of all that is being done here, but this is where all my friends are.” If a person thinks more of his friends than he does of God’s Word, he will definitely lose his soul (cf. Exo. 23:2).

Some elders and preachers have friends that they think more of than they do the Bible. It seems that some have friends (an inner circle) that are exempt from the standard that all outside the inner circle are obligated to keep. Much has been done to divide the brotherhood in the past twenty years and loyalty to friends has been the chief cause. Jesus teaches, “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). It does not matter who the brother is—sin is **always** to be identified and rebuked!

Third, **many brethren's allegiance to the University or School of Preaching they graduated from takes precedence over their allegiance to God.** I have never thought it sinful for one to seek higher education, but it is always sinful to hold man's word in higher esteem than God's Word! For years we have seen young men and women enter into so-called Christian Universities and have their belief in the inspiration and integrity of the Scriptures dealt a "death blow." I recall trying to discourage families back in the 1980s from sending their children to Abilene Christian or Harding. They chose to send their children to these Universities anyway, and some were not too happy with my condemnation of these institutions. Neither were they thrilled when I said they were simply paying for their child to be lost! A few families, however, told me fifteen or twenty years later

that I was absolutely correct. Their children were now liberals!

For years when encouraging young men to attend a sound School of Preaching, I have cautioned them to become a product of the Bible and not a product of the school. I still believe this to be the best advice I might give them. Far too many times an instructor, the entire staff, or the school is perceived to be *off limits* to criticism just because of who they are. Brethren, the searchlight of God's truth is applicable to all! If one's loyalty and allegiance lie with his alma mater instead of with the Word of God, he has indeed sold his *birthright* for a bowl of pottage (cf. Gen. 25:29-34).

In summary, no relative, friend, or institution is to be held in higher esteem than God. We honor the Heavenly Father only when we defer to His will in all matters. We can learn today from what Moses said to Israel long ago:

And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, unto Jehovah thy God belongeth heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein (Deu. 10:12-14).

The creature is never to be exalted above the Creator!

Brethren today need to seriously consider **where** their allegiance lies. Our attitudes, motives, and actions have eternal consequences. The Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The only way one will faithfully and consistently keep this command is to make certain (regardless of who or what) that his allegiance always belongs to God!

Reno, TX

The Tongue

Fred E. Dennis

Our tongues are powerful things. Souls will be saved because of the proper use of our tongues, and souls will be damned eternally because of the improper use of the tongue. The tongue is hard to control, but it can be done. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body" (Jam. 3:2). All of us stumble times without number. Much of this stumbling is caused by the tongue. When a man controls his tongue, it is a good indication that he can and does control the other members of his body.

The bit is put in the horses' mouths, and they obey us. The bit is a little thing compared with the rest of the harness. The whole body of the big horse is turned by this little bit. The ships of the sea are great and are driven by fierce winds. But the ship's pilot can guide that ship with a very small helm.

The tongue is a little member, but what great things it boasts! And how great a matter a little fire can kindle! This tongue is a fire. If we do not control it, the whole body will be defiled. The tongue causes dreadful fires. No wonder James would say, "*it*

is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"! (3:8).

Brethren will meet in the sacred worship and bless God with this tongue. Then, within fifteen minutes, this same tongue will be used to curse men. And these men that are cursed are made after the similitude of God. In other words, blessings and cursing will proceed out of the same mouth. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (3:10).

A fountain does not send forth at the same place, both sweet water and bitter. No, that is just impossible. It is just as impossible for us to bless God and curse man "out of the same

place.” A fig tree does not bear olive berries. A vine does not bear figs. A fountain does not send forth both salt water and fresh.

Preachers have had their influence ruined with certain brethren by someone saying he was a “soft” preacher. This usually means that the preacher has enough horse sense to use some tact and judgment in his presentation of the truth. Other preachers have been hurt by someone saying they are “hard” preachers. This usually means that the preacher has the courage of his convictions and is not afraid nor ashamed to cry aloud and spare not. These words are bandied about to hurtful extremes.

“For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part *is* very wickedness; Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; They flatter with their tongue” (Psa. 5:9). It is terrible when there is no faithfulness in our tongue. How many will flatter with their tongue, and then, in the absence of the one they have flattered, how they will stab him in the back! The true Christian detests flattery. Let us not flatter with our tongues.

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10). Who does not love life and want to see good days? Here is the divine recipe for attaining both. There is some close connection between keeping our tongues from evil and our lips from speaking guile and loving life and seeing good days.

Who hath not been the victim of such tongues as mentioned in Psalm 109:2? “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.” Perhaps there is no way to stop the mouth of the wicked and deceitful,

but we can so live that what they say against us will have to be told “with a lying tongue.” I see no reason we should be too concerned when folks speak against us if we and God know it was “with a lying tongue.” You know the Lord hates seven things, and one of them is “a lying tongue” (Pro. 6:17).

What consolation is this passage: “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: But a lying tongue *is* but for a moment” (12:19). Truth is as eternal as God. You can crush truth to the earth, but it will rise again. Someone has said, “Truth will come out.”

We must be careful when we are *hot* not to say many things that should not be said. “My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned: *Then* spake I with my tongue, LORD, Make me to know mine end, And the measure of my days, what it is; *That* I may know how frail I *am*” (Psa. 39:3-4). Yes, we are frail. Lord, help us to measure our days. They will be gone soon. This tongue will be lying silent in the tomb. Maybe the wounds caused by it will be going on. But thanks be to God, the good our tongues have done will continue long after our poor mortal tongues have returned to the dust.

For years, I have been convinced in my own heart that many members of the church talk too much. We are too loose with our tongues. Our conversation should be subjected to some mighty severe tests. First, is the thing we are saying true? God knows we should not tell anything that is not true, and we should know that it is true before we tell it. We should not take too much for granted. Maybe it is just hearsay or slander. Maybe some enemy of the one about whom we are talking told it.

It may be true, but it may not be kind to tell it. Undoubtedly, many true things could be said about many of us, and still, it would be very unkind to tell them. Maybe the one about whom we will say the thing has repented, or we could get him to repent.

What good will come of our telling the thing? Is our purpose in telling it that good may come of it? Are we seeking to help someone by telling it?

“For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *But*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether” (139:4). We cannot hide these words from the Lord. We may tell the one to whom we are talking not to tell it, but the Lord knows it.

Folks are dying for kind words. Let us not keep all the kind words to use on others than members of our households. A word of kindness from a loving husband has caused happiness in the heart of a true wife for days. We, parents, know how precious the words of appreciation from our children are. Let us not keep these kind words to be used after the funeral. Father and mother will not hear those kind words then. They might be with us longer if we were more kind toward them.

The law of kindness could significantly help many church disturbances. Christians ought to be able to discuss their differences with kindness. Nothing is ever gained by rude and unkind conduct. The Gospel of Christ should be preached kindly. I heard a great preacher say one time that he would allow no man to preach the Gospel more kindly than he unless that man just had the ability to do it!

Deceased

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The Apostles of Christ

J. Roy Vaughan

During the personal ministry of the Lord, he “appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons” (Mark 3:14). These the Lord called *apostles*. Paul said, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers” (1 Cor. 12:28). The apostles held first place in importance in the church. Their importance is also attested by the fact that Christ selected them, carefully trained, and taught them. As they followed Him from city to city, the Lord taught them and gave them practical lessons as they witnessed His work among the people, for Christ demonstrated in His life everything He taught. The work and mission of the apostles should be clearly understood. Too often, they are neglected by the Bible student and teacher.

After the Lord was crucified, buried, and resurrected, He appeared to the apostles on a mount in Galilee and charged them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. In this charge, the Lord committed His work into the hands of the apostles.

No greater responsibility has ever been placed upon any man, and no greater work has ever been given to any man than was the work and responsibility given to the apostles. The Lord had personally planted Christianity on the earth in the hearts of a few people. It was the duty of the apostles to plant it all over the world. And in this, they did not fail, for even before Paul died, he declared that the Gospel had been preached “in all creation under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

In carrying out the commission Christ gave them; the apostles were witnesses of the Lord. Just before His ascension, Christ said to them, “But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). They were witnesses of the life, work, death, and resurrection of Christ. No man today can be a witness of Christ, as were the apostles. Peter said, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of

his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). As they went forth preaching the Gospel of Christ, they did not preach their opinions about Him, or legends handed down to them by other men. Still, they preached what they had seen and heard from Christ. The faith of the Christian was based upon the testimony of the apostles. John said, “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). Our faith today rests upon the testimony of the apostles of Christ. Truly, they were witnesses for the Lord.

They were also called *ambassadors* of Christ. Paul said, speaking of the apostles, “We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech *you* on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador represents the ruler or government which sends him. He is the highest rank of diplomatic agent. As ambassadors, the apostles were acting

Continued on Page 5



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

The New Testament describes the church as the army of God.

John writes:

And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God (Rev. 19:14-17).

In last month's article, we noted some marks of a great soldier in that army of God. This month I would like to expand on this and notice some marks of a great army.

Great Commander in Chief

No army can be great without a great commander in chief. If the commander in chief is weak, then those who follow him will likewise be weak. The army of Christ has the greatest Commander in Chief that could ever exist. Notice how Isaiah describes Him, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be

upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). This son is the Immanuel mentioned in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew references this prophecy and translates for us the meaning of Immanuel: "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Mat. 1:23). This Commander is the God/man. He is totally God in that He possesses all the Divine attributes and qualities of God (John 1:1; Heb. 1:8). He is also totally man in that he possesses all the attributes and qualities of man (John 1:14; Heb. 2:14). Isaiah informs us that the government would be on His shoulder. It would be a Divine government with Him being King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

This God/man learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8-9) and He glorified the Father while on earth (John 17:4), thus the Father glorified Him (John 17:5) giving Him all authority in heaven and earth. After His resurrection, He told His apostles, "All power [authority—ASV, NKJV, et al.] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat. 28:18). Based on that authority, the Commander in Chief would give His apostles (and us) a Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world" (28:19-20).

Having all authority in heaven and earth, our Commander in Chief is head over the church. Zechariah prophecies about the branch (Isa. 22:22) who "shall sit and rule upon his throne" (Zec. 6:12-13). Consider Paul's statement and what the Father has done in relation to Jesus the Christ:

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

He is above all, and He is also the head of the church; the church is subordinate to Him. Paul repeats this in writing to the Colossian brethren: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Because He

became obedient unto death... God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, *of things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that every* tongue should confess that Jesus

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi. 2:8-11).

This kingship will not be surrendered as we learn from Daniel’s prophecies:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 2:44; 7:14).

Returning to that great prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, we also learn that this Commander is going to be Wonderful. His wonderful nature is observed in His birth, life, death, and glorification. Each of these deserve attention, but in this short article I will just mention them. I do want to notice that His name applies itself to His words and work. After Jesus’ wonderful Sermon on the Mount, it records, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat. 7:28-29). The people recognized the wondrous nature of His words. The chief priests and Pharisees had sent officers to arrest Jesus, but they came back without Him saying, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). Peter aptly describes Jesus’ work with the phrase, “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Then in His death He died not for any sins He committed, but to redeem man to God. The Hebrews’ writer states,

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*” (Heb. 9:12). Then he adds, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*” (10:10). What a wonderful death Jesus died to ascend to sit on David’s throne ruling as our Commander-in-Chief. Every soldier is to obey Him lovingly, zealously, without question or hesitation.

Great Officers

Even with a great commander-in-chief, an army cannot be truly great without great officers to command the troops. Likewise, the Lord’s church needs great officers. The Holy Spirit makes men who oversee the work of the church, when He directed the qualifications of elders, also called bishops, overseers, presbyters, pastor, or shepherd. Paul would say to the Ephesian elders, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter informs elders they are to take “the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly” (1 Pet. 5:2). In setting forth the qualifications for these officers, Paul stated, “(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:5). They are given the obligation to direct the affairs of those under their oversight.

While they are overseers, they have the duty “to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). Peter says the same thing: “Feed the flock of

God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2). While *feed* actually comes from the word *shepherd*, a part of that shepherding is to provide for the nourishment of the sheep: those under their care. In providing for their nourishment, they make sure they are fed healthy food. Paul instructed Titus, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). Thus, they must guard against allowing false teachers to come into the flock. After Paul telling the Ephesian elders to “feed the church of God,” he goes on to explain:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:29-31).

Also, while giving the qualification of these officers, Paul writes:

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. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

In providing the proper spiritual nourishment for the those “among you” and stopping the mouths of those who subvert the Truth, they will make sure those who teach and preach are speaking “sound doctrine.” If they are failing to speak wholesome words, then their mouths must be stopped. When they do preach Truth and

oppose error, then those elders must stand with them and uphold their hands.

Peter shows the limitation of this pastoring and that is those who are “among you.” These officers command (oversee, take care of) the local congregation they are a part of. There are no officers above the elders except the one Commander-in-Chief. Each congregation (church) is autonomous or self-governing.

Great Fighters

Without great fighters within its ranks (whether they be ground, naval, or air), an army cannot be truly great. Likewise, the army of the Lord needs great fighters who will preach the Gospel of Christ. Paul in writing to the young preacher gives him a solemn charge:

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and 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. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

He is to be a fighter preaching God’s Word and doing so at all times no matter the feelings about it. The reason is clearly stated that it is because people will turn away from the truth. Thus, there is a need for Gospel preachers to be great fighters. In preaching on that wonderful grace of God, since it

teaches “us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:11-13), they must tell people what they must do—how they are to live. They have the responsibility to teach people about the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25) and those qualities they are to live by. They need to inform people to add the Christian graces to their lives (2 Pet. 1:5-8); tell them to love and what true love involves (1 Cor. 13). They must fight to make sure people “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

These fighters must also inform people what they must not do; what they must deny. These fighters must be telling everyone to refrain from the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). They must teach people to kill certain things (Col. 3:5-9) so they will “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11) and “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 The. 5:22). He must be letting them know about God’s wrath coming on the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men as revealed in Romans 1:18-32.

Great fighters must rebuke sin in people’s lives and even name names when needed. Paul named Demas as having “forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). John, the apostle of love, named the name of Diotrephes and named his sin of loving to have the preeminence among brethren and refused to accept Jesus’ apostle John. He also says that Diotrephes cast brethren who received John out of the

church (3 John 9-10). Scripture does not always name the name of those who sin, however. The man who had his father’s wife in 1 Corinthians 5 is not named even though the sin was so grievous that it was “not so much as named among the Gentiles” (5:1).

We observe the same principle with individuals who are false teachers and their false teaching. At times Paul named specific individuals who were false teachers along with identifying their error. In his first letter to Timothy, he identifies Hymenaeus and Alexander as “having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” who Paul “put away” so they would “learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19-20). While we are not told specifically how they blasphemed (which is to speak against God), they were marked individually because of it. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul again identifies Hymenaeus but this time with Philetus as “saying that the resurrection is past already” and their teaching overthrew “the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:16-18). (Sadly, we have some today who are teaching this same damnable doctrine, and they are also overthrowing the faith of some.) Other times the false doctrine was identified without a person’s name being associated with it. Many times, circumstances will determine the need for identifying a false teacher by name or whether the name of the individual remains nameless.

Paul tells this young preacher, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:6). He states this just after

warning him, “some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (4:1). The Lord’s army needs good fighters who will “Fight the good fight of faith” (6:12).

Great Rank-and-File Soldiers

While the officers and frontline soldiers get the attention, they could not do their job without the work of many others behind the scenes. In the Lord’s army, elders and preachers may get the *headlines*, they could not get their work accomplished without the rank-and-file—the members of the church. We have thousands of members who quietly do their work for the Lord and the success

of the church. Each member is important. Paul would state, “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness” (1 Cor. 12:22-23). He put it to the Ephesian brethren this way, “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). Each member

must realize his importance to the kingdom of Christ and remember we are workers with God. Paul stated, “For we are labourers together with God: *ye are* God’s husbandry, *ye are* God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). He reminds them of this in the second letter when he states, “We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that *ye* receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1). Without every member working together with God, the church of our Lord will suffer great losses. But the church can be successful when every member pulls his own part knowing his great importance.

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Continued from Page 1
on behalf of Christ, the King. They were His representatives. Let no man today be so presumptuous as to claim to be an ambassador of Christ as were the apostles. When another nation or government rejects the ambassador, the government or ruler he represents is also rejected, likewise, with Christ and His ambassadors. Christ said to His apostles, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). To reject the apostles of Christ is to reject Christ, for they are ambassadors of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the apostles were ministers of the new covenant. Of them, Paul said, “And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also

made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Cor. 3:4-6). The apostles were preachers of the new covenant, the Gospel of Christ. They were not preachers of the old covenant or the law of Moses. For example, Paul said, “Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38).

As ministers of the Gospel of Christ, they were also called *earthen vessels*. Paul said of the ministry of preaching the Gospel, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7). The Gospel had been entrusted in the apostles. They were earthen vessels in which the Gospel was deposited and were to carry it to the world.

Jesus might have elected angels by which to send the gospel to the world, but in that case people would have given chief attention to the messengers rather than the message, and would have thought that the power and saving force was in the vessel rather than in the message it contained. But God would emphasize the value of the message and the saving power back of it. He selected earthen vessels, men beset with human weaknesses as we are, in whom everyone knew dwelt no regenerating power, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves (*Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 1).

Furthermore, the New Testament teaches that the apostles would “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Christ said: “Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes

of Israel” (Mat. 19:28). The twelve tribes of Israel spoken of here could hardly have reference to fleshly Israel. The Lord doubtless used the term as Paul did when speaking of the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). “Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham” (3:7). “For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one *man* in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (3:26-29). The apostles, therefore, were to judge the church. But how are they to judge and when are they to judge? Christ said, “in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones” (Mat. 19:28). But when is “the regeneration”? The word translated *regeneration* here is found only one other time in the New Testament.

Paul speaks of the “washing of regeneration” (Tit. 3:5). It suggests a new birth, a new creation, a reformation. This is precisely what the Christian dispensation is. Paul speaks of the Christian dispensation as “a time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). “That is, until the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the new covenant. Then old things are to pass away, and all things become new. And, hence, the new era is called the period of the regeneration. (Matt. 19:28)” (R. Milligan on Heb. 9:10).

Furthermore, the apostles were to sit on thrones “when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory” (Mat. 19:28). But Christ is on His throne now, reigning over the church. “He sat down on that throne when he ascended up to heaven, and he will still be seated on it in the day of judgment” (McGarvey). Christ said: “He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). “When he had made purifi-

cation of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). Christ, therefore, is reigning now and He will continue to reign until the end, “when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24). As judges, the apostles, through their teaching in the New Testament, interpret the law of Christ, declare what it is, and pass sentence upon those who disobey the law of Christ. In this sense, they sit on thrones, judging God’s people today.

Finally, as the apostles served as witnesses of Christ, as ministers of the new covenant, as earthen vessels in whom the Gospel was deposited, as ambassadors of the King, and as judges of God’s people, they were guided by the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and henceforth, in all they did and taught, they were guided unerringly by the Holy Spirit. We must hear and obey the apostles of Christ. When we reject them, we also reject Christ.

Deceased

Premillennialism: A Doctrine Which Blasphemes God

John Chowning

Since Hal Lindsey’s publication of *The Late Great Planet Earth* in 1973, the popularity and acceptance of premillennialism has been widespread and immense. Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins capitalized handsomely on the fanciful components of this doctrine with sixteen novels in the “Left Behind” series, published from 1995-2007. Such terms as the rapture, the great tribulation, the battle of Armageddon, the millennium are zealously promoted by the adherents of

premillennialism. [editor—more specifically Dispensational Premillennialism; Chiliasm was the term more commonly used in early church history.]

Sadly, most of those who have embraced premillennialism have no clear understanding of how many different ways it blasphemes the God of heaven. Unfortunately, they have been attracted by the spectacular and are usually unaware of the blasphemy inherent in it. Any doctrine or system of

belief which blasphemes God in any way is not of God; it is of the wicked one.

Consider three of the sobering ways premillennialism blasphemes the God of heaven.

Premillennialism blasphemes God the Father and His omniscience. Predictive prophecy is a distinctive and authenticating trait of inspired Scripture. It exists in the Holy Scriptures because Jehovah is the only deity which can declare the

end of a matter from the beginning (Isa. 46:9-10, 48:3). Jehovah's prophet could predict by name the rise of King Cyrus over a century before his birth (44:28-45:4) because He is "the LORD, and *there is none else, there is no God beside me...* that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else*" (45:5-6).

While premillennialists usually proclaim faith in Jehovah's omniscient (His ability to know everything), their basic teaching falsifies their proclamation. "He, Jesus, would have set up the kingdom but they, the Jews, rejected and crucified Him. The kingdom did come nigh when Christ came and had they received Him, it would have been manifested, but now it is in abeyance" (William E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, pp. 87-88). This is foundational to premillennialism: Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom. It was "nigh" in the days of John the Baptist and Jesus, but the plan was thwarted by the Jews' rejection of Jesus. As a consequence of this rejection, the church came into being.

Note carefully, what premillennialism teaches does not reflect the facts of history. The Jews were wanting a political, earthly ruler; yet they rejected Jesus (who supposedly was offering such to them). Why then did Jesus reject their attempt to "take Him by force to make Him a king" (John 6:15), if His mission was to be an earthly, political ruler? In addition, implicit in this interpretation of Jesus' ministry is the teaching that the omniscient Father did not foresee this thwarting of the divine plan.

According to the apostle Peter, the rejection of Jesus and His spiritual kingdom (John 18:36) by the Jews was foreknown by God. Jesus was taken by lawless hands, crucified and put to

death according to God's foreknowledge (Acts 2:23). Paul declares that Jesus' death was according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).

If premillennialism is true, God the Father is blasphemed and inspired New Testament writers like Peter and Paul are wildly wrong.

Premillennialism blasphemes God the Son. On the night of His betrayal—about fifteen hours before His final breath at Calvary—Jesus prayed to His Father. He began with these words: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee...I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:1, 4).

According to premillennialism, Jesus came to do the work of establishing a political, earthly kingdom. He failed, and according to John 17:4, **He did not even know it**; He thought He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do.

Consider the immensity of this blasphemy of the Son of God. He who knew what was in man (John 2:25), He who knew accurately and precisely what others were silently reasoning in their hearts (Mark 2:6-8), He who accurately and precisely predicted the place, events, and people involved in His death (8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34) failed to accomplish the primary reason for His incarnation and did not even know it!

If premillennialism is true, God the Son is blasphemed as an abject failure and ignoramus.

Premillennialism blasphemes God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was tasked with the process of revealing and inspiring the Scriptures. Neither the Old nor the New Testaments came by the will of man. Instead, "holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet.

1:21). Though there are two testaments and about forty human penmen, the Holy Scriptures have only one author—the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 16:13).

Because of this, when an Old Testament prophecy is interpreted by a New Testament writer, we have absolute certainty that the interpretation is accurate.

According to premillennialism, "the Church is a mere parenthesis, an afterthought in God's program of redemption, a valley invisible to the Old Testament prophets...in dealing with the church, history has left the main highway and is making a detour...Israel is like a scheduled train that has been put on a side track temporarily but will be put on the main track, the main line again, as soon as the unscheduled Gentile-Special has passed through" (William Hendrickson, *And So All Israel Shall be Saved*, p. 7).

The Holy Spirit declares that the Gospel of salvation through Christ was promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:1-2). Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled predictive prophecy (1 Cor. 15:3-4) and made possible the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles to God in one body (Eph. 2:16), the church (1:22-23). According to the Holy Spirit, the church is not a parenthesis or an afterthought in God's eternal purpose, it is the way by which the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (3:10-11).

If premillennialism is true, God the Spirit of truth is blasphemed as a liar.

The inspired counsel of Romans 3:4 is timely and still true: "Let God be true but every man a liar." No doctrine which blasphemes God is true.

Cookeville, TN

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A Modernist Cannot Partake

Cled E. Wallace

During the apostles' lifetime and the years immediately following, thousands of churches of Christ were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. The churches assembled on the first day of the week to break bread or partake of the Lord's Supper. Today, after many centuries, churches patterned after the ancient order, thousands of them meet on the same day, the first day of the week, and go through the exact observance.

What does all this mean? Is there any significance attached to the fact that on a stated day, and often a stated hour, hundreds of thousands of devout people worldwide taste a bit of unleavened bread and sip some fruit of the vine? Believe as you will concerning its origin and significance, some rational explanation must be made of the fact that such is being done. Who started it, and why did it begin? Is it a vain hope and faith that they entertain those who observe the institution? Are they merely dupes of a traditional hoax?

The observance of the Lord's Supper is so closely related to the facts of the Gospel, namely that "Christ died for our sins according

to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4), that no one can consistently partake of the elements of the Supper who does not believe these fundamental facts. Nor could anyone ever do so. It is a matter of fact that from Pentecost on, the thousands of believers who partook of "the cup of the Lord" and "the table of the Lord" (10:21) looked on that partaking as "a communion of the blood of Christ" and "a communion of the body of Christ" (10:16).

The apostles themselves entertained this faith. Saul of Tarsus, the chief persecutor of the church, accepted this faith. They all believed that the blood of Jesus, which was shed on the cross, was "poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Mat. 26:28) and that propitiation for sin must be "through faith, in his blood" (Rom. 3:25), and they entered this "communion" of the blood and body of the Lord on the first day of the week because they believed that on that day He really and literally arose from the dead. This was the faith of the Christians

we read about in the New Testament.

Were they dishonest? Were they deceived? The circumstances connected with their faith demand a negative answer to both questions. The first Christians were terribly earnest—so much so that they would surrender their lives to retain their faith. They could not have been the victims of a hoax. The Lord's Supper is a standing and imperishable monument, a guarantee that the facts of the Gospel are substantial.

This all suggests an interesting deduction. A modernist cannot partake of the Lord's Supper. He does not believe as the early Christians did, and it is out of place for him to ever touch the bread and fruit of the vine of the communion service. He does not believe that Jesus came from heaven as the Gospel relates it, that there is atoning power in the blood, and that Jesus bodily arose from the dead. He is out of faith and should ignore the Lord's Supper. A construction must be put on the language of the New Testament, which was never intended by the writers thereof to even consider him a Christian in

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Having considered the marks of a great soldier and the characteristics of a great army as a background, I would like for us to consider David's army. Since the church is God's army today, and individual Christians are soldiers in that army, it will profit us to go back into the Old Testament and learn about David's great army. We need to remember Paul's statement, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). We can learn a great deal from this army that came to David.

Background

Israel had the greatest king ever: Yahweh. He ruled through judges. Samuel was the last of the judges and when he was old and his sons "walk not in thy ways" (1 Sam. 8:5), the people said to him, "now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." While Samuel took this personally and was displeased with the people, he took it to the Lord who told him: "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (8:7). Thus, God gave them king Saul but as Hosea states, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13:11). God told Saul to "go and

smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not" (1 Sam. 15:3). However, "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them" (15:9). Samuel informed him, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king" (15:23).

Samuel then anoints David to be king of Israel. After Saul's death and David's coronation in Hebron, David goes to Jerusalem and takes the city, dwelling in the castle, and makes it his capital; "therefore they called it the city of David" (1 Chr. 11:7). In the rest of chapter 11, we are then given the chief captains and the mighty men who were the captains of the people; they were the best warriors.

This brings us to chapter 12 which begins while David was in exile from Saul at Ziklag, where David was joined by several of Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin. We are now going to be given various characteristics of the men David had in his army. There were certain types of men who were needed in his army to assure success and victory. These are the types of men needed in the army of Christ—the church.

Volunteers

David's army consisted of volunteers. They were not men who had been forced or conscripted into his army. They came of their own free will. Likewise, Christians volunteer for Christ's army when they freely obey the Gospel.

To make the choice to obey or disobey has always resided with man. After creating man and

woman, Satan came tempting Eve (Gen. 3). Eve was not forced to comply with the temptation, but she made a choice to succumb to it. Space forbids us going through the Scriptures and noticing every record of man's sin, but we would end up seeing the same thing. Invariably those whose sins are recorded made a choice to do them. No one was ever forced to sin.

While disobedience to God is a choice that each person (of accountable age) makes, the same is true of our obedience. In Genesis 4, even as Cain choose to bring an offering to God that was not acceptable to Him and later murder his brother; Abel made the choice to bring an offering to God which God accepted. In both cases, the choice was theirs to make. When God asked Cain why he was angry, God added, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (4:7). He had the ability to do well or not do well; it was his choice to make. Abel made the right choice; Cain made the wrong one.

After Joshua became leader of Israel, he led them into the Promised Land. After taking the land and God giving them rest "from all their enemies" (Jos. 23:1), Joshua as he nears the end of his

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

life, calls the leaders of Israel and gives them a farewell address recorded in Joshua 23. Then Joshua addresses all the people (24:2). He reminds them of all God has done for them. He informs them what their proper response is to God, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD" (24:14). He then challenges the people: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (24:15). Joshua had already made a choice (something some say cannot take place) for both him and his family that they would serve Yahweh. Now he challenges the people to make the same choice, but they were able to choose who they would serve. The people made the choice to serve Yahweh: "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods" (24:16). They repeat what God has done for them and conclude: "*therefore* will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God" (24:18). They made the choice as did Joshua to serve Yahweh, although it did not last long as we later find:

And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel... And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after

them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim (Jud. 2:7, 10-11).

So, after Joshua's death and those of his generation that chose to serve Yahweh, another generation arose who chose not to serve Him but to serve an idol instead.

During the period of the judges Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons: Mahlon and Chilion went to the country of Moab. The two sons married, but in the process of time, all three men died. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem (her hometown). She calls her two daughters in law and encourages them, "Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband" (Ruth 1:8-9). Orpah decided to do what Naomi encouraged her to do in returning to her family. However, Ruth made a different decision.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me (1:16-17).

Notice that Ruth chose Naomi's God to be her God. It was not (as so many teach today) that God chose Ruth, but the other way around in that Ruth chose God.

On that great day of Pentecost recorded by the beloved physician Luke in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles as was promised by Jesus (2:1-4). After a

crowd gathers (2:5-13), Peter and the other apostles begin to preach that first Gospel sermon ushering in the Christian Dispensation. Peter quickly dispatches the accusation that the apostles were drunk and goes on to explain it is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32). He then calls upon the Old Testament Scriptures to prove "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22) they had "taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (2:23). However, "God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death" (2:24). After proving such, Peter makes the conclusion, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:36). Why go through all this proof and evidence that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ" if they had no choice in their actions crucifying the One God approved? The text then records, "when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37). How could their hearts be pricked if they had no choice? Why ask such a question if they had no choice in the matter?

Peter informed these Israelites what they needed to do. They must "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (2:38). Many today teach man can do nothing, but the Jews and Peter did not believe such. He informed them what they must do, but why command this if they could not

choose to do it? However, Luke does not end it there as he states, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (2:40). Why the need to "testify and exhort" to save themselves if they could not make the choice to save themselves?

When three thousand obeyed the Gospel in being baptized for the remission of their sins (2:41), they were freely choosing to enroll in the army of Christ and become soldiers in that army. Just as David's army freely chose to come to David, so Christians freely choose to become a Christian and thus a member of God's army. They know this army is preferable to any

other lifestyle. While there might be some temporary pleasure in sin (Heb. 11:25), they have seen the true end of those pleasures: Christ will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance...who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 The. 1:8-9). They have also seen the wonderful outcome of those who faithfully serve in this volunteer army: "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4).

This volunteer army is available to anyone of accountable age to join. Jesus' great invitation was: "Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28). His marching orders for His apostles (Great Commission) was to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). At the conclusion of the New Testament, we have the invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Thus, anyone can become a part of this army of the Lord. It takes our obedience to the Gospel of Christ (that which is to be preached to every creature) and when we obey that Gospel, the Lord adds us to His army (Acts 2:47).

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Continued from Page 1
any sense. The Lord's Supper is for them, all of them, and only them who entertain and hold dear the faith of the Gospel.

The Time of its Origin

The very nature of the Lord's Supper rather accurately points to the time of its origin. It is a memorial of the body and blood of the Lord, of His death on Calvary. "This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.... This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

It points forward as well as backward. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (11:26). It cannot, then, look forward any greater distance than the coming of the Lord, and it cannot look back any farther than the

cross of Calvary. Its observance must be confined to the period between the death of Christ and His coming to raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness.

If Jesus is to reign for 1,000 years, as some contend, and do so in person after He comes again, the Lord's Supper will not be one of the observances of that reign. The character of the ordinance would have to be changed to fit such a reign, and it would then become a new and different institution. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30). This is what Jesus said to His disciples at the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Christians "partake of the table of the Lord" in the kingdom that now is,

and apostolic authority is the recognized authority in the true Israel of God.

At the close of the last Jewish Passover Supper, before the law was nailed to the cross, Jesus took the bread and the cup, gave thanks, invited the 12 to eat and drink, and explained to them the meaning of the new institution that was being born. Before this time, no holy man, priest, rabbi, or prophet had ever thought of such a thing. Abraham and Moses were as ignorant of such a thing as they were of the sprinkling of infants in the name of Jesus.

A memorial institution does not exist, and it proclaims its monumental meaning before the thing it memorializes takes place among the things of history. It was fitting that Jesus should introduce the disciples to its significance on the night of the betrayal when the very

next day, Calvary was to witness the blood of atonement.

For centuries, men had been familiar with sacrifice, the shedding of animal blood, priesthood, ritual, circumcision, Passover, feast days, and a multitude of “carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). But before the cross, we find no eating and drinking at the table of the Lord in His kingdom. This belonged to the “time of reformation,” the substance of which the former things were only a shadow. The Lord’s Supper is more than a *church ordinance*, using a common term. It suggests that we cannot go behind the cross to find the Lord’s church established. The church consists of all Christians, all of whom are entitled to eat at the

Lord’s table. It is their birthright, for they were born into the kingdom of the Lord. They remember the Lord, discern His body and His blood, and eat at His table in His kingdom.

Abraham could not thus remember Him, nor could Moses and the prophets—major or minor. They were not Christians, nor could they be, nor did God expect or demand it of them. They were not members of the church of the Lord, for it had no existence in their day. Had it existed, they would have come into it by baptism and found the Lord’s Supper waiting for their observance. There is no baptism, Lord’s Day, or Lord’s Supper in the Old Testament. Even a new word was coined to express the idea of the Lord’s Supper. It was

a brand-new thing 400 years after the last line of the Old Testament was written. We have a new law and a new priesthood. The church and the Supper pertain to the new (Heb. 7:12).

Deceased

[Editor’s Note: While Moderist cannot partake of this communion service, neither can those who hold the realized eschatology (Max King, AD 70, etc.) doctrine as they hold that Christ has already returned, the world ended, the day of judgment has already taken place and the resurrection of the dead all took place in AD 70. The communion was to last till Christ returns which they claim has already taken place, thus they cannot partake of the communion without being hypocritical.]

Is Marriage Becoming Obsolete?

Lee Moses

The above question is being increasingly raised. This is not tremendously surprising, since marriage—especially one-man-and-one-woman-for-life-marriage—is indeed on the decline in America. Many more women are having children outside of wedlock—often intentionally. About 29 percent of children under 18 now live with an unmarried parent or parents—**five times more** than in 1960. Fifteen percent of children live with a divorced or separated parent, and 14 percent have parents who never married. The 29 percent does not include children who live with divorced and remarried parents.

Efforts to impute to marriage indefinite definitions (including two men, two women, or any nu-

merical arrangement of one or both) obscure the purpose and necessity of marriage. Many couples—and singles—defiantly insist that they are perfectly capable of rearing children and enjoying all the benefits of marriage without the obligation that comes with marriage.

So, it is clear that marriage is becoming less and less the norm. But is marriage becoming obsolete?

Marriage Still Provides a Companionship Incomparable to any Other Human Relationship

When God first created man, God brought the different animals to him to allow him to name them. Yet, God had another purpose in this as well. “And Adam gave

names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam **there was not found an help meet for him**” (Gen. 2:20). Here *meet* literally means, “that which is opposite, that which corresponds,” and thus a help **proper for him** (Koehler and Baumgartner). God had already made an observation and determination: “And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*” (2:18). An animal would not be suitable for this purpose. Another male human being would not be suitable for this purpose. Multiple women would not be suitable for this purpose, either strung out individually or together at the same time. God made one woman for Adam and brought her

to him (2:22). To rectify man's loneliness and to provide a corresponding partner required one man and one woman. Adam observed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (2:23-24). To this Jesus added, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mat. 19:6). God joins a married couple together as "one flesh." Of what other human relationship could this be said? No boyfriend/girlfriend relationship approaches this, much less the perverted relationships finding increased favor today.

There is, however, a **spiritual** relationship worthy of comparison with marriage. When considering the unsurpassed love and intimate relationship Christ has with His cherished church, the Holy Spirit found **marriage** a worthwhile comparison (Luke 5:34-35; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-9). When considering a love that involves the greatest sacrificial love, the Holy Spirit chose marriage as its parallel. When considering a relationship guaranteed to exist into eternity, the Holy Spirit chose marriage as its parallel. Regardless of the abandonment of marriage by many, marriage still provides a companionship incomparable to any other human relationship.

Marriage is Still a Valuable Guard Against Fornication

Mankind was created to procreate (Gen. 1:28; 4:1). As such, it is wholly natural and expected that

mankind has sexual desires. However, those desires were intended to be gratified **only in marriage**. Fornication, sexual intercourse between people not married to each other, has caused people to go for years, if not the remainder of their lives, with filthy diseases. Those diseases have also shortened the lives of many fornicators. But far worse, fornication repulses the God who created them and blessed them with the possibility of marital intimacy.

For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, **that ye should abstain from fornication**: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence ["passion of lust"—ASV], even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter [specifically in this matter of fornication/adultery]: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit (1 The. 4:3-8).

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (1 Cor. 6:18).

So, if we are to use our bodies in a way that is pleasing to God, if we are going to use our bodies to fulfill their intended purpose, we are going to abstain from; yea, **flee** from, fornication.

However, we have degenerated into a society **obsessed** with fornication. Sexual images are splashed across television advertisements, magazine covers at the grocery store, and everywhere in between.

Popular television shows and films are geared entirely around themes of fornication and adultery. One disgusting company whose sole business is to set up adulterous liaisons even advertises by the slogan, "Life is short. Have an affair." Women commonly dress in revealing attire only a prostitute would have worn publicly a few decades ago. Both men and women are far more brazen in their suggestive remarks, if not outright propositions, to each other.

The growing temptations to fornication make marriage **all the more relevant**—not obsolete.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.... But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn ["burn with passion"—NKJV] (7:1-2, 9).

For those Scripturally eligible with prospects of a suitable mate, marriage is the God-provided answer to temptations to commit fornication.

Marriage Still Provides the Best Opportunity for Success

Poverty is much more widespread in single-parent homes than it is in married families. When a child is reared in a married family, the likelihood of that child growing up in poverty **drops 82 percent** (U.S. Bureau of the Census). As one Washington think tank was forced to conclude, "Marriage remains America's strongest anti-poverty weapon" (Rector). Married men earn much more than their single counterparts, and that goes up the longer one is married.

Success is certainly not defined altogether by one's financial well-being. But by numerous other measures—health, the likelihood of violence, mental stability, even the arbitrary measure of “happiness”—marriage provides the clear advantage. “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, And obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Pro. 18:22). “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price *is* far above rubies” (31:10).

Marriage Still Provides the Best Environment for Children

Children reared in arrangements other than by their two biological parents, or by two loving adoptive parents, suffer for it. According to studies performed by Swedish researchers, children raised by single parents have been found to suffer from serious psychiatric illnesses and addictions later in life. These studies also showed that girls are three times more likely to become drug addicts if they lived with a single parent, and boys are four times more likely.

Children are far more likely to become juvenile delinquents and go on to lead lives of crime when reared in single-parent homes. Many lament the high crime rates

found in black communities—however, the high crime rates have nothing to do with the residents' skin color, and very little to do with their culture or even their poverty. According to a study by the Progressive Policy Institute, after controlling for single motherhood, the difference in black and white crime rates **disappeared**. So why are the crime rates higher in black communities? At least one major answer comes from the predominance of single parenthood in those communities. “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

Marriage is Still God's Plan

The world may say, “A couple doesn't need the commitment of marriage to live together and rear children successfully.” The **world** may say, “Society can broadly define marriage, and it won't negatively affect society.” We have considered just a few of many reasons why this is not true. But even if marriage were not so obviously superior in those aspects, the most important reason why marriage is not obsolete is because marriage is

God's plan. “For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

Current societal trends and current societal sentiments may seem to suggest that marriage is on its way out. However, regardless of what society at large chooses to do, marriage will never become obsolete in the sight of God or of His people.

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Union City, TN

Argument for God's Existence

Michael Hatcher

Here is a basic argument for the existence of God.

Major Premise: If there is even one characteristic, attribute, or property of even one human being which could have come into existence only by the creative power of God, then that one human being constitutes proof that God does exist.

Minor Premise: There is at least one characteristic, attribute, or property of at least one human being which could have come into existence only by the creative power of God.

Therefore, that one human being constitutes proof (when the evidence is recognized and reasoned about properly) that God does exist.

This argument is valid (in the proper form) and it is true (both premises are true), thus the conclusion must be true.

The minor premise can be proven in a multitude of ways. The moral aspect of man is one way but then there is the various systems of the body which proves the premise.

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Fellowship Restored *Bellview Church of Christ elders*

In the long ago, King David wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1). As Paul introduced the seven one’s, he writes, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Brethren are to make every diligent effort to keep and promote unity. Unity should be the desire of every Christian.

However, sometimes that fellowship and unity is fractured. A fracturing of the unity had taken place in Pensacola between the Ensley Church of Christ (now Milestone Church of Christ) and the Bellview congregation. These two congregations have not had fellowship with each other for decades. This lack of fellowship has been documented several times through the pages of *Defender*. It began when a division took place within the Bellview congregation in 1987. This division became the impetus for the fractured unity between the two congregations.

This division continued even though both congregations taught and practiced the same thing (according to the leaders of both congregations). However, there were some

obstacles which had to be overcome (see previous issues of *Defender*).

On Tuesday, March 18 of this year, Michael Hatcher attended a preachers and elders Bible study hosted by West Milton Church of Christ in Pace, Florida. Brother Jason Carter set these up and has continued having them for a while now. On this date, one of the others who was attending was Ray Brantley who is the preacher for the Milestone congregation. After the study and others had left, brother Brantley and brother Hatcher (brother Carter was there also) stood around and discussed the matter of fellowship between the two congregations. There was an interest in trying to work out the problems; so, brother Brantley proposed seeing if the two elderships would be willing to get together.

Brother Ray Brantley discussed it with the Milestone elders, and brother Hatcher discussed it with the Bellview elders. Both elderships agreed to meet. On Sunday afternoon March 23, after the Bellview services (at 2:30), the Milestone elders (Randy Brantley and Louis Herrington) along with Ray Brantley met with the Bellview elders

(Bill Busch, Paul Brantley, and Michael Hatcher) and discussed the obstacles to the two congregations having fellowship.

During said meeting, all obstacles were discussed and Scripturally handled. The result is that fellowship was restored between Milestone (formerly Ensley) Church of Christ and Bellview Church of Christ.

We certainly commend the efforts of brother Ray Brantley in arranging this meeting and the wonderful attitude of the Milestone elders. It is a wonderful result that Bellview and Milestone will be able to work together for the cause of Christ. This helps fulfill Christ’s prayer, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

We look forward to working with the Milestone elders and congregation as we move forward. “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). Laboring together, we look forward to building up the cause of Christ in Pensacola.



Notes From The Editor

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Hatcher**

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David's Army

Introduction

Having seen that each Christian is a soldier in the Lord's army and that we volunteer for that army, I would like to consider David's army. In 1 Chronicles 12, David was in exile at Ziklag from Saul. David was joined by several of Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin and gives a list of the chief men among them. He then lists men from various tribes of Israel who came to David, and we are also given certain characteristics of these men. These types of men and the characteristics they possessed are needed in the army of Christ, the church, today.

The Gadites

The men from the tribe of Gad have several characteristics that are essential for those in God's army today. "And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, *and* men of war *fit* for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains" (1 Chr. 12:8).

There are several principles we should learn from this one verse. They separated themselves unto David their king. What a wonderful trait for these men. They did not have divided loyalty but were exclu-

sively for David. Some translations use *defected* instead of "separated themselves." The *UBS Handbook Series* states, "The sense seems to be that these soldiers from the tribe of Gad did not stay loyal to Saul." There might have been some others from Gad who remained Saul's subjects, but these troops left Saul and came to David to be in his army.

Likewise, Christians are to be a separated people in service to Christ. Like these Gadites, we must defect from the army of Satan and volunteer for the Lord's army. We cannot have a divided loyalty. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24). Later, He would state, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (12:30). There is no middle ground, and one cannot be both with Christ and against Him. Being a disciple of Christ requires compete and total devotion to Him even as being in David's army would require total devotion to him.

Being in Christ's army, we are required to separate ourselves to Christ. After Paul states the principle of not being unequally yoked with unbelievers, he lists several aspects of fellowship: righteousness with unrighteousness, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, believer with an infidel, the temple of God with idols (1 Cor. 6:14-16). Then Paul states, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (6:17).

In Revelation, John writes of the fall of Babylon (for this point it does not matter what Babylon represents). "And I heard another voice

from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). God's people had to leave the corrupt city. If they failed to "come out," then they would be a partaker with (the base word is from the word translated *fellowship*) the sins of Babylon for which God was destroying the city. They would be in fellowship with those sins. Notice what John writes to the elect lady and her children:

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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

When we bid God speed to one who does not bring the doctrine of Christ but some other doctrine, then we are in fellowship with his damning error. It then should be obvious that if we do not want to fellowship that which will cause one to spend eternity in torment, we must separate ourselves from it.

In addressing his first letter to the Corinthian brethren, Paul says, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints,

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). Our King James translation does us somewhat of an injustice when they add the words *to be*. It is literally that the Corinthian brethren were “called saints.” The word group of the original words have a basic etymology of “apart from the earth” or “separated from the world.” The ancients would build altars to God on stilts and, thus, apart from the earth. They called those altars *holy* (coming from the same word group as *saint* and its various forms). It then took on two applications in Scripture. It carried the idea of being free of sin and then dedicated or consecrated. God was then said to be *holy* in that He is free of sin. The seraphim in Isaiah’s vision cried one to the other, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3). This same characteristic of God is expressed by the four beasts (living creatures) in Revelation 4:8. John expresses God’s nature of being totally separate from sin by writing, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto

you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

Holy is also used regarding things. It was used regarding things like the temple, its utensils, priests clothing, the seventh day, anointing oil among other things. Instead of carrying the meaning of free of sin, it now takes the idea of being set apart or consecrated for God’s use. These things, once consecrated for God’s service, could not be used in common or profane ways.

Then people are called to be holy and those who have been sanctified are saints (as seen in 1 Cor. 1:2). Peter writes: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16). God is holy, free from sin, and He calls us to be holy. However, we cannot be free of sin because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Yet, there is a call for every accountable person to come to Christ (Mat 11:28-30) and have their sins cleansed by His blood (1 John 1:7) when they are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). Ananias came to Saul, saw one who was a believer and penitent of his

sins and told him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). This is that act of sanctification where one is made free of his sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

Having been freed from sin, the saint is then set apart or consecrated for a sacred purpose. Paul writes to his son in the faith, Timothy, “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). This is one who is not dedicated to Christ and will come out from sin and wickedness and be separate. It is one who does not have divided loyalties as they freely came to Christ and volunteered for His army and to be soldiers fighting the forces of evil and sin.

What a wonderful attribute of the Gadites. However, this is not all the text says about them, but space forbids a continued discussion in this editorial. I look forward to continuing their characteristics that were essential in being in David’s army and needed for our being in the Lord’s army.

MH

The Gospel for Today

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:9).

The ever-increasing demand for things new requires emphasis on things old. The varied products and commodities of the commercial world are continually changing. Hardly has one been marketed until a later, improved model is announced. So, the “new model” is the

salesman’s stock argument, and the only one needed.

This sentiment, sad but true, is growing in religion, and popular religion today is but little more than “keeping up with the times.” The people have become victimized by attractions and the world is deluged with many gospels. But there is only one attraction which can draw men to Christ. It is the cross of Christ.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). And there is only one Gospel that saves—the Gospel of Christ. All others are perversions. “Which is not another [gospel]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.”

A perverted gospel may have in it all of the elements of the true Gospel. There are doctrines about

God, Christ, Holy Spirit, faith, repentance, baptism, etc. But if these are perversions of the true, they have no saving power. The Gospel of Christ is the “power of God unto salvation,” and it is the truth that makes men free. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The old but ever-new Gospel of Christ is the only Gospel that has power to save.

‘Tis the same old gospel story,
Just as beautiful and true,
Just as full of Jesus’ power,
As it was when it was new.

The principles of this old Gospel—the Gospel for today and forever—may be summarized in platform style.

The Bible: God Versus Evolution

The first sentence in the Bible is where we begin: “In the beginning God.” It stands as an archway upon the horizon of time. A memory of childhood serves to illustrate this great truth. We lived near a railroad track. Often, I stood in the center of the track and looked as far down the track as the eye could focus. In the distance the rails seemingly converged or reached the focal point. Beyond that the eye could not see. Then it was only an amusement and a wonder why. Now it is the picture of a mighty truth. Looking back through the centuries and millenni-

ums of earth’s generations, everything comes together. The rails converge in the first sentence of the Bible: “In the beginning God.” Beyond that point no man can see. Everything before it is admittedly “prehistoric,” the admission of speculation on the part of those who try to begin before and without the God of the Bible.

The Bible: Christ Versus Modernism

Too much is heard today about Jesus the **man**, Jesus the **teacher**, Jesus the world’s greatest **character**, and not enough of **Jesus Christ the Son of God**. Modernism accepts Jesus the man and Jesus the teacher but rejects Jesus the **Christ**.

The first sermon of a converted infidel, Saul of Tarsus, “proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9: 24). That is the heart of every Gospel sermon today.

The Church Versus Denominationalism

The Bible view of the church is not that Christians may form themselves into so many religious societies, parring with commercial clubs and fraternal orders, furnishing the religious association of our choosing. The Bible church is one body—“many members, but one body.”

The question, “What church do you belong to?” has become so com-

mon that one expects it as he does a usual morning salutation. Yet, Scripturally speaking, it is known to be true that one had as well inquire, “What God do you worship?” or, “What Christ do you believe in?” Our Bibles all read: One God, the Father; one Lord, Jesus Christ; and one body, the **church**. We want the church versus denominationalism.

Salvation Versus Sensationalism

The evangelism of the apostles was of marked simplicity. It consisted in the Gospel story plainly and simply told. It was void of all sensationalism and ostentation.

Today, passing from the extreme of a slow, agonizing waiting at the altar of prayer, once known as the “mourner’s bench,” religionists have swung to the “get-saved-quick” system of a modern sensationalist who exhorts his hearers to “hold up your hand” and “sign a card,” and the work is done.

Both methods are perversions, but there is more of religious devotion and change of heart in the former *delusion* than in the later sensation. The New Testament plan of salvation has never changed. Its simple conditions, briefly put, are faith, repentance, and baptism, all of which together *translates* us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son.

Deceased

Continued from Page 7
never admitted, “I was wrong.” Not only do they refuse to see it in the heat of passion, they cannot even do so ten or twenty years later. Pride causes people to defend bad decisions and to refuse to apologize for hurtful things they have done (even though they may have been unintentional). Sometimes, when people re-

spond to the invitation, they say, “If I have offended anyone...” Was sin involved or not? If an action constituted sin, then God was offended whether or not any of us were. Pride keeps people from genuine repentance.

Life is a battlefield. Whether the conflict is internal, between brethren, with false religion, or with the world,

Christ has equipped us with the appropriate armor for the fight. “But I don’t like antagonism, and I choose not to participate,” someone might protest. Then Satan has already won. “If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small” (Pro. 24:10). “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

Winter Park, FL

Life is a Battlefield

Gary Summers

The title may remind Pat Benatar fans of her Top Five hit in the fall of 1983: “Love Is a Battlefield.” Actually, over the years there have been many “Love Is...” songs. Just a few of them include Love Is: “A Golden Ring,” “A Hurtin’ Thing,” “A Many-Splendored Thing,” “A Rose,” “A Stranger,” “Blue” (the wonderful instrumental by Paul Mauriat), “Like a Baseball Game,” “Like a Rock,” “Like Oxygen,” “Strange,” “The Answer,” “The Tender Trap,” and “Thicker Than Water.”

Although love has been compared to numerous objects musically, songs explaining what life is like are considerably fewer. In fact, there is only one—a novelty song from 1974—“Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me).” Although no one has done it yet, perhaps the day will come when someone composes, “Life Is a Battlefield.” Why would we set forth life in those terms? We do so because the doctrine comes from the Scriptures.

The Christian armor is described in Ephesians 6:10-17, where we are told that we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (6:12). What exactly is Paul saying?

Although people in the world may not realize it, conflicts have always characterized life upon this earth. When Satan tempted Eve to sin, he did not thereafter retire. He sought and successfully won over Cain, whose jealousy led him to murder his brother (Gen. 4:1-8). The devil was scarcely satisfied with these first two victories. He next en-

listed Lamech into his legion of evil-doers. On and on it went until “every intent of the thoughts of his [man’s] heart was only evil continually” (6:5). Was Satan’s lust for destruction sated by all of those lost in the Flood? Not even a little bit! He started in immediately on Noah’s son Ham and grandson Canaan to re-establish wickedness in the earth.

What more proof do we need to understand that the devil’s goal is to make sure that as many souls as possible are condemned to eternal torment? Therefore, life—every individual’s life—is a battlefield. How does Satan fight against us? He uses every weapon he can: he fights dirty with no holds barred.

He tries to keep people away from the Truth, since it is the means of freedom (John 8:31-32). Someone might protest, “Well, he has failed to do that. The Bible is a perennial best-seller.” One must consider, however, three flaws with this assessment. First, the fact that people **own** them does not mean that people **read** and **study** them. Second, many are reading inferior versions. Although there are four or five decent translations, the most popular one in use (the NIV) does not even claim to be a literal translation (and it is not); it is called a *dynamic equivalent*, but because of its erroneous renderings, it would more appropriately be termed a *lazy approximation*. It is especially evil to put manmade doctrines **into** the Biblical text—rather than translate the Word literally, as God wrote it. Third, in many countries the Bible is not even available, or there are penalties for becoming a Christian. The more access people have to a le-

gitimate translation, the more likely they are to come to a knowledge of the Truth.

Another technique Satan uses, upon those who have read and studied carefully for themselves, is to try to make Christianity as confusing as possible. The establishment of religious denominations from the 1500s to the present day is enough to stymie anyone seeking true religion. Many of these (and older religious groups) say the Bible is not sufficient. The Jews, for example, talk about the “Oral Law” that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. They believe these teachings are as true as the Bible’s. The Catholics will admit that all truth was taught in the first century (orally) but that it is revealed a little at a time in successive generations (through the pope and magisterium). Various cults (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, Seventh-day Adventists, et al.) have their own individual revelations from God. All of these cults have an authoritative voice (Joseph Smith, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen G. White). Jews and Catholics rely upon oral tradition, which is allegedly inspired. If the abundance of these conflicting teachings is not enough, we then are faced with the Pentecostals and charismatics who have their individual revelations. “The Holy Spirit told me....”

Jude wrote that the faith had been once for all revealed (Jude 3). Peter agreed that God had granted to us “all things that *pertain* to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Why did the Holy Spirit inspire the apostles to record New Testament doctrine in

the first place? If He planned to do it again in every century, then no compelling reason for writing it down was needed. If He intended to keep inspiring His Holy Word in every country in every generation, then why bother to reveal His Word through only eight men in units varying widely—in length—and preserve this Bible down through the ages? Why go to the trouble of revealing it, confirming it, and preserving it for two thousand years—if He is just going to re-reveal it continually?

Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit is speaking to all those who claim to be hearing Him, then all of us are faced with a predicament that has no solution. How are we to determine who is telling the Truth? The Catholics, the Mormons, and the Pentecostals all claim miracles to prove their messages are valid, but they all contradict one another. The pope will not acknowledge that Joseph Smith possessed any authority and vice versa. Pentecostals deny any obligation to listen to either one of them. The Oneness Pentecostals reject the teaching of the Trinitarian Pentecostals and vice versa—but they both purport to do miracles from God that prove they are right.

It is precisely for this reason that God revealed **all** of His Word in the first century and confirmed it with signs and wonders (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4). Today, therefore, we need not participate in all of the confusion, because God has given us the Bible as our sole authority and as the means by which to measure anyone's claim "to speak for God." God has not given anyone a new revelation. The Holy Spirit does not speak outright to individuals today or give them *nudges* as to what to do. The voices that people think they hear

from God are their own internal thoughts. Some folks speak to themselves out loud; the rest of us carry on silent conversations within our minds. Some think, if they have a bad thought, that the devil spoke to them; or if it is something positive, they imagine that *God* spoke to them. Neither case is true. God has spoken to all of us through His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17), which is all-sufficient.

No Response?

Even among those who believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, however, problems exist. The reason for the disharmony lies with man's propensity to formulate creeds and develop traditions. Calvinism has influenced most modern religious denominations, but each one of its tenets is false—and therefore deadly. Its adherents are quite evangelistic. They want to convince everyone that salvation is by "faith only" and that no act of obedience on our part (such as repentance and baptism) can avail anything. True Calvinists do not even believe that we can have faith on our own—unless God gives it to us (as set forth by Michael Horton in his book, *Putting the Amazing Back Into Grace*).

We will, until the Lord returns, be fighting this doctrine, which affects everyone's eternal destiny. Calvinists seek to convince people that God does it all and that they can do nothing. While it is true that God did everything in making salvation **available**; it is also true that we must respond to that salvation to obtain it—we must **access** what He has provided for us. For that reason, Jesus invites people, "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28).

What are Christians to do—simply allow this false "gospel" to permeate the entire world, thereby ensuring the eternal condemnation of millions—or do we fight against this fatal error? Life is a battlefield.

Brethren

Ah! But once we begin to discuss the church, the body of Christ, at last we have harmony and peace, right? Lamentably, it is not so. Nor has it been since about ten years after the establishment of the church. Galatians is considered to be one of the earliest books of the New Testament written, and its purpose is to deal with a huge problem—the Judaizing teachers who insisted that the Law of Moses also be kept in addition to the New Testament teachings. Paul taught some very *hard* doctrine (cf. John 6:60) concerning this heresy. Among other things he told these brethren that they had turned away to a different "gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9). He claimed they had been bewitched (3:1) and that those attempting to be justified by the Law of Moses had fallen from grace (5:4).

The fact is that this false teaching had disrupted the unity which had existed in the body of Christ. What are brethren supposed to do when someone injects false doctrine into the church? They can do nothing and just wish that it would go away (of course, it will not), or they can take issue with it by presenting the Truth, which is what the inspired apostle did. Frequently, members become disillusioned because it seems to them that the body of Christ ought to be united, since Christ shed His blood for all of us. Many become discouraged by strife—whether brotherhood-wide or within their own congregation. But it will occur!

Why? The overriding reason is that Satan is still fighting God. He has fought Him from the beginning of the creation of the world. He did everything in his power to keep Christ from coming into the world to redeem mankind. He was defeated in that endeavor, but he is still committed to the destruction of the church and of individual Christians.

He works through ungodly men who, though Christians, vie for control and influence in one or over several congregations. Sometimes, they even speak perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30). Paul said to mark and avoid such men (Rom. 16:17-18). He even named some specific individuals who possessed this character (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18). Unfortunately, Satan is very successful at what he does. Consider some of the errors of the last century:

- The use of instrumental music into worship
- The advocacy of the false premillennial doctrine
- The binding upon others things God had not bound
- Neo-Pentecostalism
- Max King's doctrine of "realized eschatology"
- Marriage and divorce heresies of all stripes
- Max Lucado/Rubel Shelly liberalism (characterized by fellowship as Christians those not in the body of Christ
- Performance-oriented worship
- Grace minus our obedience
- "All of life is worship"
- The Holy Spirit operating directly on the Christian's heart

There are many other errors held by various brethren, such as theistic evolution, annihilation (in place of the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment), acceptance of Calvinism,

etc. What can the church expect in the next hundred years, at the rate we are going?

Besides these doctrinal difficulties, there have been many personal problems; unfortunately, many congregations are trying to live down the stigma of a preacher who has not paid his bills or run off with the secretary (or someone else's wife). Some congregations have been plagued by ungodly elders who refuse to resign (one had propositioned several young ladies).

Who else is there for Satan to target besides Christians? How much time does he need to spend on those already committed to sin? How much energy must be expended on those who, although well-intentioned, are nevertheless outside the body of Christ, having never obeyed the one Gospel? Those entrenched in the world or committed to false religions are of no vital importance. The devil concerns himself with those thinking about becoming a Christian and with those who already have done so. We may not see a bull's-eye painted on us, but we are all candidates for his personal reclamation project. Jesus told Peter: "Satan has asked for you [plural *you*, so all the apostles], that he may sift *you* as wheat" (Luke 22:31). That ought to make all of us tremble and pray for strength to overcome every temptation.

Personal Strife

As already suggested, we may not even be at peace with ourselves. Satan uses the same techniques on us as he did on Adam and Eve—because they work. For example, we have already noted how that many have succumbed to adultery or fornication. Why do we listen to Satan when he seduces us into thinking

that there is another woman or another man with whom we would be happier? And why are we so dissatisfied to begin with? Very likely, the problem involves too much Hollywood and too little Scripture. Satan is an expert at providing options which we have no authority to exercise.

The lust of the eyes also entices us to place value on the things that are essentially worthless. If our Lord could turn down all the kingdoms of the world—which is much more than we will ever be offered—we ought to be able to refuse *small change* items. Yet, apparently, the extent of the problems is such that two of the Ten Commandments dealt with the issue: God charged Israel not to steal and not to covet. Even possessing the whole world would not be worth the cost of one's soul (Mark 8:36-37).

At least these first two can be seen for what they are. Even as men pursue them, they know they are wrong in doing so. Pride is the tricky one; it is much easier to see in another. When someone refuses to acknowledge wrongdoing and seeks to rationalize his behavior, he may not see what he is doing, but others will.

Pride keeps people out of the kingdom of heaven, because they cannot bring themselves to admit that they have been wrong or that their loved ones were wrong in their beliefs. Rather than embrace the Truth and welcome it to their lives, they reject it because they fear their family more than God. Some refuse to repent because they are convinced they have never behaved all that badly. Oh, how pride blinds!

Among Christians, we cannot help wondering how many will ultimately be lost because they have

Continued on Page 4

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How Does God “Open” Hearts?

Don Tarbet

In response to a recent article on whether or not “the Holy Spirit helps Christians to understand the Scripture,” we have received a request to explain certain passages that may seem to contradict what the conclusion drawn in that article or at least deserve some explanation. We are happy to do so. The first article was entitled, “Does The ‘Indwelling Spirit’ Help Us Understand?” Our clear conviction is that the Holy Spirit absolutely does not **directly** help anyone to understand Scripture, other than what He has already done, giving us plain and understandable Truth. Yet, to some there are concerns about certain passages in the New Testament that allude to something **God** does that is related to our understanding of Scripture. These passages were not written directly in connection with the Holy Spirit assisting us but related to God *giving* or *granting* certain conditions whereby one may receive the truth or understand and obey it. Let us examine them in their context and see how they do or do not relate to the matter of the Spirit’s assistance.

Luke 24:45 is the first Scripture given. The KJV reads, “Then

opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” Other references in this chapter relate to the eyes and hearts being either closed or open to certain truths. In verse 15, some *reasoned* together, but their eyes were *holden* (24:16) “that they should not know him.” We are not told if there were tears in their eyes, or if there was a special divine action that caused them **not** to recognize Jesus so as to allow Him to further teach them and reveal Himself to them. Then, in verse 25, Jesus stated that they were foolish in not believing “all” that the prophets have spoken. Now, their *eyes* and *hearts* were **not** fully open to the truth. Then, He expounded on the Scriptures what the prophets wrote, and **then** their eyes were *opened* (24:31) and they concluded that His presentation of the Scripture had begun their enlightenment (24:32). Then, with the eleven gathered together, Jesus rebuked them for their “unbelief” (Mark 16:14) as they had not fully concluded that He had been raised from the **Scriptures** (Luke 24:44). Now, it is said that He “opened their un-

derstanding,” that they might fully understand regarding His resurrection, as He reminded them of what the Scriptures said regarding this matter. What Jesus **said** caused them to understand what the Scriptures really meant. We see nothing *miraculous* in opening their hearts, but rather the power of what was said.

Acts 16:14 is the second Scripture given. The KJV reads, “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” The *open* heart refers to either the condition of her heart before the things she heard from Paul, or to something manifested in her obedience after she heard. We do know that the Bereans of Acts 17:11 had open hearts (“readiness of mind”) before their faith was developed, which could be the case of Lydia. Or it could be that God is simply given credit for this woman **having** an open heart, which allowed her to receive the Word with all readiness of mind and then attend to the things spoken by Paul. Either way,

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Introduction

In last month's article, we noticed the Gadites and how they had separated themselves unto David. We, as Christians, are to be a separated people for God. We cannot have divided loyalties. However, that is not the only quality of the Gadites needed by Christians today. Notice again what is recorded of these soldiers: "And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, *and* men of war *fit* for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as the roes upon the mountains" (1 Chr. 12:8). They were men of war for the battle.

These men were well trained for battle. They were able to handle both shield and buckler which is a spear or lance. They were skilled in close fighting or as we often call it, hand to hand combat. Being "men of might" is that they had valor or had great courage in the face of battle. They were both fierce as a lion and fast as a deer in battle. Christ needs and deserves a well-trained army.

All Christians

When speaking of all Christians, Paul teaches we are to put on the panoply (whole armor) of God.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:11-18).

In arming ourselves with this armor, we are being trained in the usage of God's Word. We must be well-trained as we are in a spiritual fight against strong forces. If we are not well-trained, we are likely to fail to stand against the foe. That armor that we put on is used both for defensive measures and for offensive measures. Each item in that armor has application, in one way or another, to the Word of God. Thus, Christians must be trained in the Scriptures and the proper understanding and application of that Word to their lives. Hosea wrote of the people of his day, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God" (Hos. 4:6). The people had a personal responsibility to know God's law. Isaiah said much the same when he wrote, "Therefore my peo-

ple are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: And their honourable men *are* famished, And their multitude dried up with thirst" (Isa. 5:13). This is what happens when we do not know God's Word. No wonder Paul instructed Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). It is no wonder why the beloved physician, Luke, said of the Bereans, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Even though being taught by an apostle of Christ, they still studied the Word for themselves. Likewise, every member of the Lord's church should study the Scriptures to make sure they are approved of God and be well-trained for the battle.

Elders

Elders, those who oversee the local congregation of God's people, are ones who must be particularly well-trained for the battle. One of the great problems in the Lord's church today is we have far too many pastors who are so poorly trained. These men are to be examples to the congregation (1 Pet. 5:3). Yet so many pastors are so ill-

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

trained, they cannot be examples to the flock as they do not have the knowledge as to how to live properly themselves. They have the obligation of overseeing the church (Acts 20:28), but they do not have the ability to oversee. A big part of overseeing the church is to make sure the flock is properly fed. How can they properly “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2) and “to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28), when they do not know enough to discern whether the food (spiritually) is good or evil?

One of the qualifications of bishops is “apt to teach,” or as the NKJV has “able to teach,” and the Lexham English Bible has “skillful in teaching.” Some have joking said that the text does not say, “apt to teach anything.” Yet, some are *apt* to do just that because they do not have enough knowledge of God’s Word, and some are steeped in false doctrine. They sit at the feet of denominational commentaries and regurgitate their error in their failed attempts at teaching. They know very few of the fundamentals of the faith much less the deep things of God.

These men in particular must be “set for the defence of the gospel” (Phi. 1:17) as was the apostle Paul. When false teachers rear their ugly head, those pastors must stop their mouths. In writing to Titus, Paul stated:

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. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert

whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

These men have the responsibility of the souls under their care. The Hebrews’ writer states, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). How is it possible for these men to “watch for your souls” when they do not have enough spiritual knowledge to discern between truth and error. John’s admonition is futile with these brethren: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). These men do not know enough to “try the spirits,” and what we find out is that they often invite grievous wolves into the flock, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29-30). A weak eldership is one of the main, if not the main reason the church is in the shape that it is today: sliding into apostasy or already there.

Preachers

Elders are to be the leaders of a congregation, but so often that leadership role falls to the preacher. Generally speaking, whatever the direction of the preacher will be the direction of the congregation (it is not right but the way it is in most congregations today). So, we need preachers who are well-trained. They need to have a knowledge of the Scriptures, but they also need to know false doctrine and how to recognize such. Preachers, and all Christians, must know how to ascertain Bible au-

thority and be able to distinguish between those things God authorized and those things He has not authorized.

Regarding those things God has authorized, they must be able to determine those things God has mandated as opposed to those things where God has given us liberty (optional matters). Preachers must be taught these basic principles and know how to apply them and how to teach them to others. It is needful to know that God authorizes in one of three ways: (1) direct statements, (2) examples, or (3) implication (there is only need for one of the three for something to be authorized). Yet, many preachers have no idea of Bible authority and how to ascertain it. A multitude of congregations have absolutely no idea of Bible authority and if you speak of it, they get strange looks on their face because they have never heard of such. Their preachers have never preached on it and their elders did not demand it be done. The result of such ineptitude is apostasy as members do not really know right from wrong and how to discern such.

Preachers are given the responsibility and privilege to “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Yet, many preachers given that opportunity instead of preaching the Word of God, give more nice, comfortable after-dinner-speeches than anything else. They give little feel-good speeches to make sure everyone leaves feeling good about themselves (even if they leave in a lost state).

Preachers are to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (4:2). While preachers are to do this as they preach the

Word, it closely resembles what the Scriptures are to be used for: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (3:16). Yet, many preachers cut out "reprove, rebuke." They are willing to preach the *truth*, but not all the truth. They are not willing to do as Jesus did and preach the "hard saying[s]" (John 6:60) because when those teachings start coming, they know that at that time, many of their disciples (members) will go back and walk no more with them (6:66). So many today will not preach on drinking alcoholic beverages (many will defend the drinking of them *in moderation*), immodest apparel, divorce and remarriage, the sin of denominationism (and all those in a denomination will be eternally lost), fornication (including living together without the benefit of marriage), adultery (including those who divorce for reasons other than fornication and remarry), impure language, dancing, materialism, gossiping, lying, and a multitude of other sins.

They will not speak clearly regarding the church of our Lord. Many are wishy-washy regarding the worship of the church. They willingly speak about singing but

will not affirm using instruments of music including vocal bands, beat boxing, praise teams, and such are sinful resulting in the loss of one's eternal well-being (unless they repent). Some will not even speak clearly regarding the elements of the Lord's Supper and that it is only authorized upon the first day of the week. Many have advocated (with many others simply accepting) prayers which are not directed to the Father but to someone else (i.e., Jesus or the Holy Spirit). Congregations today will use the funds donated by freewill offerings and finance the church through other means and many will never speak up. So many members today, and some preachers simply disrespect the preaching of God's message to man by sleeping, passing notes, chatting, and a thousand and one other things when we should be concentrating on and studying the Word being proclaimed. How many preachers will simply accept the *status quo* and how many will take a stand as a true warrior of Christ?

We need warriors today in our preachers who are well-trained to take a stand regarding the work of the church. The word the Lord gave the church to do is to save souls which is to be accomplished by preaching the Gospel to the lost,

edifying or building up those who are saved, and benevolent activity to those in need. Yet, congregations, elders, and preachers continually advocate and follow through with doing things outside of the work God has given. To them the church is more a social institution to deal with the various problems of society instead of a spiritual institution dealing with the salvation of souls. We need well-trained preachers who know how to defeat the wiles of Satan as he works in so many congregations of the Lord's church today.

Conclusion

Sadly, today, there are so many untrained elders, preachers, and members that result in the church sliding off into apostasy. Today, as we observe the church of our Lord in so many areas, instead of simply drifting away from God's Word, we are at a dead run away from Biblical principles. Many congregations would not be recognizable to Christ and the apostles (as one brother calls them—*mainline churches of Christ*). Let us train ourselves to effectively use God's Word to prevent the apostasy of so many congregations and members of the Lord's church today.

MH

Continued from Page 1
she had an open heart, and it is said that she *heard* before it is said "whose heart the Lord opened" (16:14). In either case, there appears to be no *special* working of God to open her heart. We might note that reference is made to her having an open heart **before** she attended to the things Paul spoke,

and there would be absolutely no kind of an "indwelling Holy Spirit" within her, for she had not obeyed the Gospel. She either had an open heart before she heard, or it was manifested **in** her obedience, but there would have been no involvement with the Holy Spirit in "helping her to understand" the Scripture.

John 6:65 is the third Scripture given. The KJV reads, "And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." What He had *said* unto them regarding this, is found in verses 44 and 45 of the same chapter. There He stated the Father would **draw** a man to Christ (6:44). Then, He

used Scripture to explain what He meant, and stated, “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (6:45). So those “given of the Father” are those who come to Christ, and they are the ones who are drawn to Christ **by** having heard and learning of the Father. Again, the power is in the Scripture as used by Christ. God **grants** those who *hear* and *learn* to go to Christ.

John 12:39-40 is the fourth Scripture given. The KJV reads, “Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded *their* eyes, and hardened *their* heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” The *they* of this passage refers to those who had already heard Jesus speak, and had seen His miracles, and yet could not believe, because of their hardened hearts. Did the Lord not allow them to believe and be converted, or does this description describe some who had hardened their own hearts and refused to believe? One can put a ball of **wax** and a ball of **clay** (both the same size) out into the sunshine, and one will melt and the other will harden—neither because of the sun, but because of what they are. In Exodus 7:14, God told Moses,

“Pharaoh’s heart **is** hardened; he refuseth to let the people go.” God sent word to Pharaoh to let the people go, but he refused (9:13-14). Because his heart was hard, he refused to let the people go (10:1). Because of the plagues that came upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, it could be said that “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:20). God hardened his heart because of His Word, but Pharaoh’s own heart was stubborn and hard. God hardened the hearts of the unbelieving Jews of John 12, because they rejected Jesus. It was because of their hard hearts that they were not able to believe, and *this action* is simply confirmed by what Isaiah wrote. “The words refer to those which have gone before, not to those which follow, and then by an addition gives the reason more fully” (*Elicott’s Commentary*). In summation, the Jews were blinded and hardened in heart already, that they could not see and understand, and this was simply confirmed prophetically by Isaiah in the Old Testament. It was not a case of God **or** the Holy Spirit **directly** causing their lack of understanding, and neither directly causing anything.

Second Timothy 2:7, 25 is the fifth Scripture given. In the KJV, they read, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.... In meekness in-

structing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” These verses refer to something God *gives* or *grants*, as various translations read. Acts 11:18 answers all this. God had the Word **preached** to the Gentiles to give them the opportunity to understand and to repent. God thus extended “repentance unto life” to the Gentiles. Again, nothing said about a **direct** influence of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this.

Second Thessalonians 2:10-11 is the sixth and final Scripture given. In the KJV, it reads, “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Verse 12 goes on to say that “had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Just as God sent the plagues to the Egyptians, so He allows strong delusions to come to those **choose** to “believe a lie.” Nothing direct or indirect on the part of God or the indwelling Spirit to cause an acceptance or rejection of the truth. My own understanding of these matters does not come from either, but from a study of the divine Word itself.

Deceased

Dangers Facing the Church

H. M. Phillips

[Editor’s Note: This article was published in the October 1945 issue of *Apostolic Times*, Yet, what brother Phillips discussed then is just as apropos as it was then, if not more so.]

There have been many dangers that faced the church in the past, but it seems to me that they have increased in the last several years. The war has left its stain on the members, and the standard possi-

bly has been lowered, not only in the world, but among those claiming to be the Lord’s. It surely will take quite an effort for the church to stem the tide and not be engulfed in the waves of the world.

Will the church so stand? Well, I hope so.

Much has been said about the professional preacher and well may we ponder the subject. Preachers are very necessary to the prosperity of the cause, but the kind that is seeking to fleece the flock and not go out to increase the bounds of spiritual Israel will eventually wreck the purpose of the church. This slick, easy, soothing political fellow, who is trying to build around him a set of lovers, who, in the time of need, will outvote the settled decisions of the wiser ones in order to keep self intact, is but a danger which will wreck the cause. He will do some good but his motive and influence in the long run will endanger the life of the church of the Lord. It will come to the point that they will not work without him and are about spiritually dead with him. He is the kind that takes charge and charges on his way, regardless of the elders, but not regardless of the young people and a few popular women.

However, I do not blame him as much as I do the elders, who profess to be the leaders, as they sit idly by or drift along with him and let the church become a tool in his hands for his own making. They are to oversee the flock, not see over the things being done (Acts 20:28). These professing elders are not, as a rule, as well informed as the professional preacher. He is looked up to more and soon the elders are in the background, because they are ground back. Preacher, elders, and congregation all ought to work together with the Lord (1 Cor. 3:9). Elders are often asleep as the preacher is working hard on the machinery and oiling it, ready to run and take the church

out of the hands of the elders, if, indeed, it were ever in their hands.

Elders are there for life, but the preacher is there for only a few years, for the reports in the paper are so glowing that another congregation outbids the one where he is, and he must move, on account of his health. He will often raise his salary by telling them what another church has offered.

Discipline is an unknown item in most churches. Outsiders are not respecting the church much because of such. Why do we not do that which is commanded in the name of Christ—to withdraw from the disorderly (2 The. 3:6)? Is it true that we could not find ten righteous to save the church? Are we afraid that there will not be any left? Are we afraid to start it for fear that we will be among the number? This is surely a danger facing the church.

Fine, costly houses come in for their part, to keep the church in debt for years so calls must be turned down. Then, when the large fine house is paid for, so many worldly members have come in for the nice house that they are about ready for a split. Raising money and the number present are so well grounded in the minds, that nothing else seems worthwhile to report. This soon results in a material thought and a lack of spirituality. Some places spend more on the house and talk about it more than on the church. Sad but too true.

Only a few will act in the service in a public way, while many are ready to find fault, but will not raise the little finger to get a correction made. Many who do take public part ought never to do so, because of the way they live every day. Merely finding a fault is not

all, but remedy it is the effective thing.

Jealousy and envy are two prominent brothers in most churches. I am told that jealousy is a species of insanity, and I am certain that envy is a part of devilanity. For James declares that every evil work is where it is (Jam. 3:16). Song leaders are not free from it and often will not lead when asked because they had been asking others. Elders come in for a good share in that they are fearful that another will get more of the prominence than they and so demand that they have an equal share in the public appearance with others. Preachers could be included in this as they desire to be the outstanding one. This will possibly never cease as long as people are people. Women are sometimes in this affair and disturbances are often in a community.

I have never felt that the young people and entertainment were as much a problem as we want to make it. In Bible times we read of no such problem in the church. Not till we were endeavoring to ape the denominations did we begin to have this problem. If we would get back to the Bible plan of letting the old and young be together, as the Lord made them, and both worshipping on the same level as Christians, we would be much more at peace and have less trouble. Taking young people off on a picnic, or an outing trip on Sunday, away from the churches, and, as a salve, taking the Lord's Supper along, and, amidst the frolic, stopping and making a remembrance of the Lord, is surely not the main issue of the Lord's way. Why have we gone so far in the denominational methods that it will become

so difficult to get back to the Lord's plan? But, if we will turn, even a little at a time, we will, in later years, come back. Till we learn that the church is not to entertain either the

young or old, but to be of a more serious and important matter, our people will not advance very far towards the Lord's way. Some things may have been made to entertain,

but certainly not the church. The road to heaven is not made up of man's entertainings as a part of the church. Let us see to that.

Deceased

Important Words

Paul Vaughn

Words are essential to Christians because it is through the written Word that God communicates to man. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures can make one wise unto salvation and sufficient to instruct man about God and His way for all men. God's Word can build up and encourage those who are obedient to it.

Numerous words in the Bible receive a great deal of attention. Some of those words are *reconciled*, *sanctification*, *righteousness*, and *redeemed*. These words need to be studied by every Christian. Other words are essential and require the attention of the faithful Christian. Why? Because God used them in His inspired Word, the Bible, they get God's message across to man.

Have you ever thought about *done*? There is a great deal that can be learned about it. It is the past tense of "do." *Done* is defined as "complete; ended...dead, ruined, dismissed as a failure" (Webster). The Greek language defines the word as "render inactive, abolish, passing away" (Vines). *Done* is a word that can show action or inaction. It may be used in the negative or the positive.

Used in the negative, *done* shows displeasure. God was displeased with the actions of Adam and Eve. "And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life'" (Gen. 3:13-14). It shows the evil actions of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. "He has done evil to this people" (Exo. 5:23).

Done can also be used in a positive way to show satisfaction. It describes the actions of Ruth toward her mother-in-law, Naomi. "And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before'" (Ruth 2:11). In the model prayer Jesus said that God's will "be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Mat. 6:10).

What would happen if more people paid extra attention to *done*? They would understand that the miracles performed in the New Testament have stopped! "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor.

13:10). People would understand that the Law of Moses was done away when Jesus died on the cross and came up out of the grave on the third day (2 Cor. 3:7-13). Those who make a show out of religion by jumping up and down, joking, and foolishness would understand that God expects worship to be conducted orderly. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). If more attention were paid to *done*, people would be cautious about their actions in this life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Christians would know that some things must not be overlooked with a better understanding of *done*. Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Mat. 23:23).

Done is a word that most people view as insignificant, having little importance. Yet, it is a word that everyone would love to hear on the day Christ returns for those who are His. When Judgment Day comes, which would you rather hear. "Well done, good and faithful servant" or "Depart for me, you that work iniquity?"

Hopkinsville, KY

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Grace, Faith, and Law *Franklin Camp*

Grace, faith, and law are three terms that must be understood to comprehend God's scheme of redemption. Misconceptions of these words have produced much confusion about how men are saved from sin. Two major errors (the doctrines of "faith only" and "grace excludes all law") grow out of a misinterpretation of these words.

The Context of Romans

The verses of our study must be seen in the context of the book. Romans is Paul's defense of "his gospel." In it, he shows that the Gospel is in harmony with the promise to Abraham (Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 4:13). To prove the Gospel did not conflict with the promise to Abraham, Paul had to show that the law was a system of faith that culminated in the Gospel Paul preached. Romans 3:21 makes this point.

The law and the prophets pointed by faith to the promised seed, Christ, and the Gospel. The book is introduced with this thought: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (1:17). God's plan for saving men had to be in

harmony with His character. "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (3:26). Sin alienates man from God. God cannot condone sin. The means of saving man had to be such that man could be restored to a state of righteousness compatible with God's nature! Unless this is kept in mind, Romans will be misunderstood.

"From faith to faith" means from the Old Testament faith into the faith of the Gospel. The faith of the Old Testament reached its goal in the Gospel when Jesus stated on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Paul's quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 proves that the law pointed to Christ. Why quote the verse if not to show that the law was a system of faith? It not only pointed to the faith of the Gospel, but it also required faith at the time it was made. Paul needed to show why the law without Christ could not save. In Romans 3:22, he establishes this truth: "Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ." Three things are involved in this statement. First, the character of God is involved. It

would be inconsistent with His nature to save man and encourage sin. His law had to be honored. Second, since God is perfect, the plan had to maintain His righteousness and place man in a righteous state. He could not save man and let him remain in sin. Third, it had to be a plan that placed the merit in Christ yet required man's obedience.

With the law honored and God's character sustained by Christ's perfect life, the way was opened for man, with his imperfection, to become righteous. Thus, it is open to all that believe. The perfection of Christ and His death on the cross was how God demonstrated His righteousness in passing over the sins under the law and showing His forbearance and justice. His perfect faith and obedience saved the faithful under the law. The cross provided the grace needed for those under the law. The remnant living when Paul wrote Romans found righteousness by faith (9:32). National Israel followed, looked to the law for righteousness, not looking for Christ as savior, and did not attain it (9:31). Why? They did not seek it by faith (9:32). National,

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Introduction

As we have considered the Gadites, they separated themselves for David and his army. We also learn they were well-trained as soldiers. This made them very effective soldiers for David even as Christians need to be very effective soldiers in the army of the Lord. The Spirit revealed some more aspects we need to learn about the Gadites in writing, "These *are* they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all *them* of the valleys, *both* toward the east, and toward the west" (1 Chr. 12:15).

Nothing Stood in their Way

These Gadites would not let anything stand in their way in coming to David. The first obstacle mentioned was crossing the Jordan. That might not have been that great of an obstacle at times, but this was the first month. The first month was springtime and the melting snows from the Lebanon mountain range and in particular Mount Hermon caused the Jordan to flood creating a very hazardous river crossing. These Gadites were not going to allow the hazardous river crossing to prevent them from coming to David.

There was another obstacle for these Gadites that was possibly

more hazardous than the river crossing. There were enemies who stood between them and David. It was various ones who lived in the valleys, and they had to fight all of them in coming to David. The Gadites not only fought all those of the valleys, but they also put them to flight. While the Spirit did not see fit to inform us of how many the Gadites fought against, nor their power, it would not have mattered as the Gadites were determined to go to David. They were not going to allow anything or anyone to stand in their way of getting to David and becoming a part of his army.

One Cannot Allow Anything to Stand in his Way

First, one cannot allow anything to stand in his way in coming to Christ. Even as the Gadites had obstacles in their way, people today might have various obstacles in their life which, if allowed, would prevent them from coming to Christ. One of the great hindrances in coming to Christ in our society is the prevailing attitude of worldliness, in all its various forms. The tug of the world with all its pleasures is strong. As Jesus explains the parable of the Sower, He says, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Mat. 13:22). While Jesus specifically makes application to those who initially received the seed, it would be just as applicable to individuals before they received the seed. If the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches can choke God's Word out of one who has received it, those things can

prevent one from receiving it to begin with. Many would rather enjoy the pleasures of sin in its various forms during this life and not concern themselves with the afterlife.

Through the years, family has often stood in the way of some who would come to Christ. I heard of a situation where a woman on her deathbed told her adult son to never become a member of the church of Christ (as he was married to a member of the Lord's church). As far as I know, he never obeyed the Gospel of Christ. We probably all know of situations where a family is fine with a family member becoming a member of a denomination, but if they mentioned becoming a member of the Lord's church, the family would rebel and do everything in their power to prevent it. Jesus' words are very appropriate in such situations, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (10:37-38). Yet, the pleas and finagling of family is an obstacle that is too big for some; but, to come to Christ, we cannot allow family to prevent us from coming to Christ.

Money, riches, and possessions are another obstacle for many in

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

coming to Christ. In Luke's account of the parable of the Sower, in the seed that falls among the thorns, He explains that it is, "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life" (Luke 8:14). The almighty dollar is a power to many today which is difficult to overcome. We see the same thing happen to the rich young man who wanted to know what he needed to do to have eternal life. When Jesus told him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me" (Mat. 19:21), we see the power of riches "when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (19:22). He went away sorrowful and lost because of his possessions; they were more important than Christ and eternal life. Yet, many today, especially in some societies, are in the exact same situation as was the rich young man.

When we have come to Christ, we must not allow any obstacles to prevent us in fighting for Christ. As we began looking at this series of lessons, we began by reminding ourselves that we are soldiers in the army of Christ. As soldiers, our duty is to "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and is literally "the faith" or the Scriptures, the Word of God. Yet, there are many obstacles standing in our way which we must overcome in fighting that good fight.

One major hindrance in being a good soldier who is set to fight is many of the prevailing philosophies of our day. Postmodernism permeates our society today. From a religious standpoint, postmodernism considers there are no uni-

versal religious truths or laws. Postmodernism promotes relativism and pluralism. From a religious standpoint, *pluralism* says that all systems of authority and all viewpoints, explanations, or perspectives within society are all right and valid. No religion is wrong and ultimately no religion can be right. Contradicting views are just "my truth" and "your truth" but there is no objective truth. Diversity is glorified and encouraged. The only real *sin* or *evil* is when one opposes this view. It seems most today cannot fathom the idea of there being one, objective truth and everything other than that one truth is wrong. Relativism also denies universal truth saying that everything is relative based on culture, circumstances, and such. With such thinking pervading our society, it becomes difficult and discouraging to enter into such a battle to defend God and objective, universal truth. Not only proving God exists, but only the God revealed in the Bible is the only God and all others are false. It seems like a monumental task to defend the Scriptures and the one and only one way that leads to life.

The overwhelming amount of false doctrine weighs us down that we become discouraged even thinking about it. It is difficult to even find anything in the Bible that has not been a source of false doctrine. Depending on how things are counted, there are over 40,000 *Christian* denominations while some say over 45,000 (while they claim to be *Christian*, we know they are not as no denomination is truly *Christian*) and rising daily. The reason for any denomination is because there is a group of people that simply do not want to follow

God's Word. They teach something contrary to God's Word. If they taught God's Word and only that Word, then they would cease being a denomination and they would be the church of Christ. The multitude of denominations and all the various doctrines make finding the truth more difficult for anyone seeking to do right. But for the soldier of Christ, we look out and see all these various false doctrines and we begin to lose heart at the seemingly overwhelming odds we face. We must overcome all the false doctrines by taking the fight to them. We must, as Timothy, "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18) against any and every false doctrine that comes down the pike.

However, we have many who are members of the Lord's church that do not want us to fight that good fight of the faith. When brother Thomas B. Warren debated the atheist Anthony Flew, brother Warren was condemned by many brethren because they were opposed to honorable debate. In many congregations, it is taboo to mention any denomination and show the error of their way (many of those so opposed because they do not want to offend their denominational friends). In doing what the Lord demands all of us (fighting the good fight of the faith), we are rebuked and condemned by our own brethren who should be lifting up our hands in the battle as Aaron and Hur did with Moses' hands (Exo. 17:12). Yet, they do everything they can to help the enemy of Christ. We all need to be soldiers in the Lord's army and not allow anything or anyone to stand in our way of coming to Christ and fighting for Him.

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fleshly Israel failed (refused) to see their sinfulness as shown in the law. Therefore, they did not see the need for grace and a savior. This distinction is vital in understanding the book of Romans and this paragraph in chapter 3.

Grace, faith, and law are terms that need to be understood. *Grace* refers to God's graciousness, the divine influence of God through Christ and the Gospel, which touches man's heart and is reflected in a life of gratitude and loving obedience. *Faith* is a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah—the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience. *Law* is the divine standard that reflects God's moral character and perfection and sets forth man's responsibility to Him. The crucial problem in redemption is, "How can sinful men have fellowship with a perfect God?" The answer is found in Romans 3:21-25.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (3:21). Note the word *now*. Christ, the promised seed and savior, had come when Paul wrote this. National Israel had rejected Him and refused to accept the Gospel. They sought to be righteous by the Law of Moses, separated from Christ. The law pointed to Christ. Leviticus was the heart of the law. The sacrifices, high priest, mercy seat, and the day of atonement were all shadows or types pointing to Christ. Each year, the repeated sacrifices and remembrance of sin made it clear that man needed grace, but this was incomplete without Christ (Heb. 10:1-14). The prophets reinforced the witness of the law in such pas-

sages as Isaiah 7:14 and 53:1-12. *Now* in Romans 3:21 reaffirms what I said earlier about "from faith to faith." "Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (3:22). Keep in mind the definition of law. It is the divine standard reflecting the moral character of God and His perfection. God cannot ignore the law without condoning sin.

Man's imperfection comes short of the glory of God. How is it possible to reconcile God's perfection and man's imperfection? The problem is solved in Romans 3:22. It is the faith of Christ and faith in Christ. God's character demanded that the law be perfectly obeyed. Christ did this. This is the significance of **the Faith of Christ**. His perfect faith enabled Him to live a perfect life and honor the Law of Moses. This made it possible for God to maintain His righteousness and restore man to a state of righteousness in Christ by grace through faith. Works of law without faith in Christ make faith void (4:12). Faith and grace go together (4:16). Faith combines law and grace. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (3:27). Here are two laws. The law of works is the law separated from Christ. The law of faith is the law that trusts and obeys Christ.

Faith reconciles grace and law. Law, apart from grace, demands perfection. Faith trusts in the perfect work of Christ and expresses trust in obedience. This puts merit in Christ and not in the act. Works of faith "working together with his works" made His faith perfect (Jam. 2:22). Law isolated from

Christ and His cross demanded perfection. The law of faith is another way of expressing the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Faith is trust expressed in obedience. Faith trusts the work of Christ, not the action or command. Every work separated from His work becomes a meritorious work. That is what made the works of the law meritorious. If the commands of the Gospel are not obeyed as an expression of trust in the work of Christ, they are meritorious works.

Repentance is faith in trusting God's goodness (2:4). Confession is faith in trusting the deity of Christ. Baptism is faith in trusting the blood of Christ to wash away sins (6:3-4). Prayer is faith in trusting God to hear our petitions and expressing our gratitude to Him for His blessings. Giving is faith trusting God to provide our needs and expressing our gratitude for His grace (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Now we have grace, faith, and law as set forth in the Scriptures. I hope this study helps us better understand these concepts and the relationships that exist between them.

Deceased

Continued from Page 7
occasions in our lives when we ought to pray—when prayer is needed and beneficial. How can we neglect so great a potential for good in our lives by not praying? Surely, we see the importance of prayer to Jesus, to His apostles, and to the church of the first century. Surely, we realize the important place prayer should have in our lives as disciples of Christ and members of the church of the New Testament today. May we all inquire, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Aurora, CO

The Torah, Talmud, and Noahidism

Mike Demory

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

The apostle Paul had dealt with the Judaizers almost since he began preaching the Gospel in Asia Minor and elsewhere. They had come to Antioch of Syria, where Paul began his ministry, insisting that the brethren had not been taught the complete Gospel. To hopefully put an end to this misunderstanding of God’s Word, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to settle the matter. After several days of study and discussion, it was decided among the elders and apostles that circumcision was not necessary for salvation for Jews or Gentiles. However, they did all agree there were four main issues that all must agree with (1) abstaining from idols, (2) fornication, (3) things strangled, and (4) eating blood (Acts 15:19-24).

Jews have long recognized the Torah as the Law of God, as revealed to them by Moses at Mt. Sinai. We refer to the first five books as the Pentateuch, but the Jewish community calls it the Torah, both written and oral law. Of course, we do not recognize oral tradition or law, as only God’s Word is inspired, something oral tradition is not. During the first century BC, commentaries concerning the Torah began to be written and were not completed until the fifth century AD. These commentaries were called the Talmud, meaning learning or instruction.

There are two Talmud sets—Jerusalem Talmud and Babylonian Talmud—with the latter being the most prominent. Like the oral traditions (laws) of the Torah, both sets of the Talmud, not being inspired, do not pose any authority from God. They are merely a compilation of rabbi’s opinions and would appear to be the traditions followed by the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees of the first century AD.

It is through the Babylonian Talmud that mention is made of the “Seven Noahide Laws” (known in Hebrew as, “Sheva Mitzvot B’nei Noach”). It is argued that these seven laws were commandments given by God to Noah after the flood, as derived from the Torah (Gen. 9:1-7). While the context does not give us any clues concerning the Seven Laws, like every false teacher, they argue that it is implied and found in oral traditions. They also turn to Genesis 2:16: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” and contend that God gave the seven laws to Adam since he and Noah are progenitors of the human race. But again, we find no reference whatsoever to the seven laws the Zionists claim. What are these laws, you ask?

- (1) Do not deny God (no idolatry)
- (2) Do not blaspheme
- (3) Do not murder
- (4) Do not engage in sexual immorality
- (5) Do not steal

(6) Do not eat the flesh of an animal still living

(7) Establish courts and legal systems to ensure obedience to these laws.

The first six were given to Adam, with the seventh given to Noah—supposedly.

Most of these laws come from the Ten Commandments, where it is clear God gave them to Moses to give them to the Israelites (Exo. 20:1-17). There is, of course, no doubt that Adam was given more laws than merely not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17), as the murder of Abel by Cain was charged as a transgression, something that could not have occurred had there not been a law to transgress. However, to point to Genesis 2:16 and 9:1-7 as specific verses that contain these principles of righteous behavior is overconfident at best.

It was not until the 1850s that the idea of Noahide laws began to be discussed. Then not until 1990 that Noahidism was founded by Orthodox rabbis from Israel who had ties to Zionist organizations, including the Temple Institute. In 1991, this group petitioned the U.S. Congress to recognize Noahidism, which they did with House-Joint Resolution 104. Unlike the conspiracy theorists who claim this is a law meant to destroy Christianity, Resolutions are not laws; they only recognize a person or organization. President Trump, in 2020, signed a similar Resolution at his son-in-law’s request. Noahides have long referred to Muslims but referred to Christians as well—non-Jews, in

other words. Like Acts 15, where the Judaizers said Christian Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved, now the Zionists have put together an organization that can be found around the world to teach non-Jews they must keep the “Seven Noahide Laws” to be saved. The most interesting one of the seven is number two—blasphemy. As it applies to Muslims who believe Allah is the one true God, it now applies to Christians who believe Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh, the promised Messiah. There are over 20,000 Noahides worldwide, with the greatest number in the Philippines.

There are many warnings around the internet of this organization, particularly concerning law number two, which according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, carries the death penalty by guillotine should the world court so rule. This is reminiscent of the Jewish Sanhedrin court called the “High Council of Bnei Noah.” This is the only thing these sites warn against, as they agree with the Zionists that the Messiah will come to establish

a kingdom in Jerusalem and reign on David’s throne. They agree with the Zionists that before that can happen, the third temple must be built, and they are assisting them in gathering all the temple clothing, utensils, etc. They agree that Mosaic law will return with all the sacrifices in which only the Jews can participate. Now, is it not strange that God would require of His chosen people (Deu. 14:2; Rom. 1:16; 2:9) that they keep all 613 ordinances of the Law of Moses to receive a heavenly home, but the “Righteous Gentiles” that keep the Six Noahide laws, are guaranteed a home in heaven? I thought God was no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

For anyone who has heard about this phenomenon and has been worried about it, just remember that God is in control and that if we are faithful to do His will, we have nothing to worry about. This Noahidism is nothing new, as it happened in the first century, and now Satan has just repackaged it to get us to keep our eye off the proverbial ball. As the Jews did in

the first to the fourth century, getting the Romans to do their dirty work, putting to death as many Christians as possible, they are again doing the god of this world’s bidding. All we need do is be as faithful and unrelenting as those saints under the altar for the cause of Christ (Rev. 6:9). This Chabad-Lubavitch movement is a branch of Hasidism, which had its beginnings during the Maccabean period and eventually became the Pharisees. They are strict observers of Jewish Law like the Pharisees and Judaizers, requiring Christians to keep the law to be saved.

The Noahide code holds no more authority over a member of the Lord’s church than the Torah or Talmud. This law or code is as made up as the names of angels found in Jewish writings. It is, however, something we should be aware of, but nothing to worry about. Our only focus should always be keeping ourselves pure in heart and making sure God receives the glory in all things.

Mexico, MO

Lord, Teach us to Pray

Lester Kamp

Prayer can be defined as: “communion with God, implying that He is a Person able and willing to hear us; the One Who created the universe and still preserves and governs all His creatures and their actions.” “Prayer moves the arm that moves the world and changes things and men.”

Prayer is **powerful!** Our Savior obviously realized the importance of prayer for He prayed often. His disciples noticed His place of prayer in

His life and came to Him on at least one occasion and requested, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

We are taught the power of prayer repeatedly in the New Testament. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16). James also tells us, “ye have not, because ye ask not” (4:2). Though the power is available to every child of God, how often do we neglect to use that very power and instead rely upon ourselves. No

wonder we so often fail to accomplish what we want and fail to become what God wants us to be! Lord, teach us to pray! “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

We attempt to make decisions on our own. Decisions need to be made every day. Some of these decisions are very important not only for our lives here on earth, but also for eter-

nity. We struggle to make the right choices; we worry and fret. Peter wrote, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-7). Our Lord prayed all night before selecting His apostles (Luke 6:12-16). Lord, teach us to pray.

We feel the aloneness and pain of physical affliction. We sometimes cry out in despair. We try to deal with illness on our own. James states, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray” (Jam. 5:13). Paul prayed for his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7-8). The answer given to Paul because of his prayers was not necessarily what he expected, but what he needed. “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (12:9). Lord, teach us to pray.

We get so busy we think we do not have time to pray. Our lives are certainly hectic and filled with all sorts of activities. Instead of not having time to pray, we must take time to pray. Jesus was pressed by great multitudes demanding His time; the work which He was sent to do (i.e., the saving of the world) was certainly more demanding than anything we might undertake. Yet, in the midst of this, “he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:15-16). Lord, teach us to pray.

We are confronted with all kinds of problems—problems in the family, personal problems, problems at work, etc. Finding the right solution to each problem is sometimes overwhelming. When the Lord’s body, the church, was confronted with the

problem of the neglected widows, the problem was immediately taken to God in prayer (Acts 6). The right solution was found. Lord, teach us to pray.

All of us face trials and temptations in life regularly. John recorded these words of Jesus in John 16:33: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” He spent all night in prayer before His trials and crucifixion (Mat. 26). Lord, teach us to pray.

Distress and anxiety plague many of us. Such exist mostly when we concentrate on our problems instead of our blessings, or when we fail to realize that we are not alone. Note the words of David, “In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of his temple, And my cry came before him, *even* into his ears” (Psa. 18:6). Taking everything to God in prayer and thanking Him for all our blessings helps us replace the pangs of distress with peace from God. Paul wrote, “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” (Phi. 4:6-7). Lord, teach us to pray.

Sin often besets us. Note these words contained in the “model prayer” given by Jesus, “And forgive us our debts [sins], as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mat. 6:12-13). God has placed limitations on our temptations. He has promised us: “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” (1 Cor. 10:13). When we are tempted, there is always a way to escape sin. Prayer can often help us find it. Prayer is part of the solution for sin when it occurs in our lives. There is no way for sin to be removed (forgiven) without prayer (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). Sin is primarily against God. We must repent of our sins and confess them to Him. Consider David’s prayer recorded in Psalm 51. Lord, teach us to pray.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecution is never easy; it is always unpleasant; yet, all the faithful will experience it. It is often difficult to bear. After being beaten and cast into to prison, “at midnight Paul and Silas prayed” (Acts 16). After having been threatened by the leaders of the Jews and strictly told not to preach in the name of Jesus, Peter and John “went to their own company... and... lifted up their voice to God” (4:23-24). There is power to endure and power to overcome found only in prayer! Lord, teach us to pray.

Before we are separated from those that we love and about whom we are concerned, we should pray. Paul realized that he would likely never be able to see and visit with the Ephesian elders on this side of eternity. He was concerned about the church and concerned about the elders. Before he left them, Paul “kneeled down, and prayed with them all” (20:36). Lord, teach us to pray.

There is, therefore, no wonder that the Holy Spirit guided the apostle Paul to write, “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17). There are so many

Continued from Page 4

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“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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What is Verbal Inspiration?

Guy N. Woods

It is the view that the Bible is an inbreathed, inspired, divine document which, as originally given, is inerrant, infallible, and therefore, true.

(1) Such is the claim which it makes for itself:

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:21).

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12).

(2) More than 2,000 times, the Scriptures assert that God issued them.

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, And his word *was* in my tongue (2 Sam. 23:2).

And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:6-9).

I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me (John 17:8).

Be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye (Mark 13:11—ASV).

What shall be thought of one who is affected to believe the Bible yet asserts that it has a fallible human element to be sifted by “sanctified common sense” from the divine in the light of these affirmations?

(3) Nothing short of **verbal inspiration** will meet the demands of the case that the Bible presents. History affords manifold instances of men’s difficulties in determining the meaning and intent of documents that seasoned and scholarly writers wrote. These men wrote under the conviction that their words would be subjected to the most minute and searching examination. They were, nevertheless, unable to avoid the litigation they had diligently sought to circumvent. Such is common in the matter of wills, though written by legal experts. Though penned by the ablest statesmen and lawyers that the land afforded, the Constitution of the United States of America has been. It remains a source of the greatest difference of opinion regarding its meaning. Though among the world’s ripest scholars, the translators of the King

James’ and American Standard Versions could not select words to convey the mind and meaning of the Holy Spirit in every instance wholly satisfactory to all students today. Significantly, the authors of the Constitution of our land, the ablest legal minds of the day, and the most profound scholars of the time could not have received a divine message and then, **in their own words**, delivered it to the world in such unambiguous fashion that the meaning was always and everywhere apparent. But, if such men could not have done this, are we to suppose that a group of ignorant fishermen, insignificant and uneducated peasants of Palestine, shepherds, and herdsmen could have succeeded where they failed?

(4) The Law issued from Sinai, a limited, temporary, and confessedly inferior law in the light of the one to follow, was handed to Moses from the hand of God, written by Deity, on tables of stone. Are we to conclude that, though this law was, by its manner of deliverance, protected from the possibility of error, the law of Christ was vouchsafed to the world through the weak and fallible minds of uneducated, untrained

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

When David was in exile at Ziklag from Saul (1 Chr. 12), several came to enlist in David's army. In previous articles we noticed how the church is the army of God today and we, as individual Christians, are voluntary soldiers in that army. Christians need to possess the characteristics of those men coming to join David's army. We considered the Gadites and how God described them.

We next come to soldiers from the tribe of Judah. "The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war" (12:24). What a wonderful statement concerning the "children of Judah" that they were "ready." These soldiers were armed for the war. They were ready to go into battle when they entered David's army. They did not come to David and his army and ask to be trained for the battle after the battle began. These men came to David armed with shield and spear ready for the fight.

Christians need to be like these Judahites. Christ needs soldiers who are ready. Peter puts it concisely by saying, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason

of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Another word for *ready* is "prepared." We are to be prepared at all times to *give an answer*. This is from the Greek word *apologia* and literally means "defense, reply, answer." This *defense* (a legal term used in courts) is used for what a defendant would make before a judge (Acts 22:1; 25:16). Wuest states that it "was used of an attorney who talked his client off from a charge preferred against him. He presented a verbal defense." The Christian is to be prepared to make a verbal defense of the hope he possesses. Peter had previously spoken of that hope the Christian is to be prepared to make a defense when he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1:3-4). That hope is our eternal salvation and by extension everything that accompanies it. That certainly includes being able to defend God's scheme of redemption, the uniqueness of the church, its worship, work, organization, etc.

Paul, in writing to the Philippian brethren, said they were in fellowship with him in three areas: "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace" (Phi. 1:7). Paul used logical reasoning to establish his case for Christ and Christianity. Those brethren were supportive of Paul as he made a de-

fense of the Gospel. Later in this chapter he again uses this term regarding some who were preaching Christ of "envy and strife" "supposing to add affliction to" his bonds. There were others preaching Christ out of love. Paul says, "But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel" (1:17). He was like a sentry posted for duty in fighting for the Truth of the Gospel. This is how every Christian should be.

The Judahites were ready for the battle. In the battle for Christ and Christianity, we need to be ready to give an answer of our hope, but we also need to be ready and active to do good works. Paul would write, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Tit. 3:1). As always, Jesus is our perfect example of this as Peter describes Jesus to Cornelius by saying, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). While we, of course, cannot perform the miraculous healings Jesus did, we can still be doing good. Dorcas was a wonderful example of such as the beloved physician describes her, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did” (9:36). After her death, the brethren went to Peter to come where she was. Luke then records, “Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (9:39).

Why was Dorcas “full of good works”? She made coats and garments for the widows.

She was a beautiful example of one practicing pure religion: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). By making coats and garments for the widows she practiced pure religion by visiting the widows in their affliction and doing good works. Likewise, in the wicked, selfish world we live in today, we must be ready to make a difference in this world of darkness by doing good works.

The Bible also teaches us to be ready for the Lord’s return. As Jesus began teaching regarding His physical return (the Second Coming), He states, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:44). However, notice the contrast our Lord makes between the one who is ready and the one who is not.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made

ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint

1 Tim. 1:18-19a; 6:12

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith... Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (24:45-51).

What a difference between one who is ready and one who is not. As soldiers in the army of God, we must live ready for the coming of our Commander-in-Chief. We are also taught by God’s marvelous, saving grace to look “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13). When we receive God’s saving grace and are looking for our Lord’s return, we will be “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

As soldiers in the Lord’s army, we must not only be ready for the battle in propagating the Gospel and defending it, we must also be soldiers living the Gospel. Jesus said:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and

put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Mat. 5:14-16).

We need soldiers in the Lord’s army who will be like the children of Judah who are “ready armed to the war” as we “bare shield and spear” (1 Chr. 12:24). Sadly, a problem with far too many is that they

simply are not ready. Many have been members of the Lord’s church for decades and still need the milk of God’s Word and not the meat.

The same was true of the recipients of the Hebrew’s letter as the writer states:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat (Heb. 5:12).

As the church, generally speaking, has lost the warrior mentality, we have grown further from the Scriptures and our knowledge of God’s Word. Worldliness and materialism have had its effect on us, and we have grown accustomed to compromising to appeal to the masses. When one compromises in one area, there is no stopping point. The result is that many congregations have become nothing but a denomination among denominations. They would never imagine being like the children of Judah in baring shield and spear, ready armed to the war. We need more brethren who are like the Judahites.

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Continued from Page 1
and unscholarly fishermen, tax collectors, etc.? It is admitted that the only way we can ascertain the truth and accuracy of the Word of God is through the record by which it has been delivered to the world. Must we rely on the judgment of such men who wrote according to the wisdom which they possessed, and this without divine guidance?

(5) Near the close of the Revelation, a solemn warning against any addition, subtraction, or modification is appended:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

It is observed that here, the words are of such divine signifi-

cance that they can neither be added to nor subtracted from. Are we to conclude that the description of heaven is set out in Revelation in a fashion surer than the conditions essential for us to comply with to get there in other portions of the Bible?

On the birthday of the New Testament church—on the first Pentecost following our Lord's resurrection—the apostles, though without formal education in the schools of higher learning, spoke fluently and intelligibly in languages hitherto unknown to them. Who would be so naive as to believe that the words they uttered were of their own choosing and that they addressed themselves to the multitude in languages unknown to them but which they spoke without divine dictation? When Peter, the spokesman of the occasion, delivered the words of Acts 2:39 regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles, he had no conception of the significance of what he was saying. He

would later require a miracle to convince him of the truth that he spoke here. This fact argues irresistibly for verbal inspiration; no other conclusion is possible. Our Lord said to the apostles, "But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:11). Observe that the apostles were not to think what they were to speak; this would be supplied them by the Spirit. There is but one way in which one can speak—that is to utter words! The Holy Spirit would perform this through the apostles. The words, "for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost," means it is not you who give utterance to these ideas in words; it is the Holy Spirit who gives utterance to these ideas in words through you (1 Cor. 2:13).

This is verbal inspiration.

Deceased

The Faithful Preacher

C. R. Nichol

There are some things I wish were different. One is: I wish the people did not demand the life of the preacher be more circumspect than that of other Christians. My wishes are not consulted. There are some things that some church members can do without the smell of smoke being left on their garments, that if the preacher does, he is blackened in the estimation of many who are in and others who are out of the church. Whether the preacher will have it so, or not, he can ruin his influence by doing some things which would not be

adversely criticized in other church members. There are those who have confidence in the integrity of the preacher, and believe he has a knowledge of right and wrong. He must guard his influence.

I mean there would be no sin in eating meat that had been offered to idols; that is, there would not be sin in the mere act of eating. Yet, he said: "if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. 8:13). The weak brother, the brother not so well informed as Paul was, see-

ing Paul eating meats which had been offered to idols is led by Paul's act to stumble; hence, Paul declared he would refrain from eating meat. He was guarding his influence.

Nothing is more sensitive than the conscience, when it is properly treated. When healthful it never fails to condemn or approve our actions when they correspond to that which we have been taught is wrong, or right. If you have treated your conscience right, it is very sensitive. It lashes when you do that which you believe to be wrong

and approves when your life corresponds to that which you think is right. Let us not forget though that conscience may be so ruthlessly treated, it may be stifled so many times that it may become as insensitive as the flesh when seared with a hot iron. If you have subscribed to the right standard and then conduct yourself in such a way that your conscience lashes you and do not right your life, you are headed on the downward way, you are scheduled for wreck and ruin unless you reverse yourself.

Be true to Jehovah. Are you a servant of Jehovah? Then remember: Fight *spiritual wickedness* whether in high places or amongst social outcasts. “Fight the good fight of faith.” False doctrine God hates. It seems to me that there are so many—some of them in the church of Christ—who freely tell you that certain doctrines are false, yet they lift not their voice to condemn or oppose such doctrine. God hates false doctrine, and the man who follows in the teaching of the Lord hates such doctrine too. Being a soldier of Christ, you are to grant no quarter to false doctrine, and no compromise must be made with the enemies of Christ. The enemies of Christ must capitulate before there can be a truce between the servant of Jehovah and the one who opposes truth, even though they may think they are teaching the truth and practicing principles of righteousness. You cannot give your aid or influence to building a congregation in which you know there will be fundamental truths of the Gospel denied and things not true taught. To give your help to building men into a congregation where you know they will be indoctrinated by teachers in that

congregation who never miss an opportunity to teach false doctrine, is for you to do such people a grave injustice and lend your influence to building a congregation which is not true to the teaching of Christ.

If I am asked to labor with a congregation through a series of meetings, it is tacitly understood, if I accept the invitation, that I will assist them in building them up, and use my best influence to increase the membership by the addition of new members. If I do not strive to do such, then I am guilty of betraying the confidence they have shown by inviting me to labor with them. It is not reasonable to expect that a congregation would ask me to labor with them through a series of meetings, or for a longer time, if they thought I would not be true to what I believe to be right, and seek to do them good. Accepting an invitation to labor with a people, it is due them, and to the Lord I cannot be true, if I do not seek to teach them the truth and correct any error they may hold especially along fundamental lines.

To Timothy the command runs, “I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-3). It is possible that some persuade themselves when they “preach the word” and “let other people alone,” they have met the demand of the Lord? Not only is one commanded to “preach the word,” but the command runs: “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” Does

some one suggest that the command to *reprove* and *rebuke* is to be directed against moral perverts; and the *exhorting* is to induce them to turn from such lives? Surely no one entertains the view that such should not be done, but in the foregoing passage it is clear that Paul had in mind false teachers, as is evidenced by that which followed. He adds: “For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine.” Paul knew that false doctrine would be foisted upon the people, and he exhorted Timothy to “reprove, rebuke” such teachers, and to “exhort” them to cease such. A preacher is unfaithful if he does not condemn false doctrine; and he does not meet the demand of the Spirit if he only condemns it in a general way. “Preach the word”—that demands the presentation of the truth in an affirmative way. But more is demanded, namely “reprove, rebuke” false teachers, specifically mentioning it, and making an assault on the false teaching. The faithful preacher today will do as Paul did. He who teaches contrary to the Word of the Lord should be pointed out. “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). I know a preacher brother who recently was asked to labor with a congregation, and in membership were some who held to false doctrine. He made special effort to teach them the truth by examining the views they held. He accepted the opportunity given him to lead them from their erroneous views, nor did he hesitate to make the assault in such terms that they knew he was trying to uproot the false position they held.

Deceased

Zephaniah

James W. Jordan

Zephaniah is another one of the authors of the Old Testament whom we know little about, and his book is one of those little-read, less studied, and still less understood sections of the Scriptures.

The Author

All we know concerning the author is found in the opening verse of his book. He was the great-grandson of Hezekiah, who may have been the famous king Hezekiah of Judah. Zephaniah's name seems to mean "He whom Jehovah hides or shelters," and he speaks of the sheltering of those who seek God (2:3).

The Time

Zephaniah sets the date as being in the days of Josiah, the king of Judah. This would be somewhere between 640 and 609 BC. Josiah attempted a reformation during his reign, but it did not produce any marked change in the people's hearts or lives. It is noteworthy that the prophet does not make any charge against the king, even though he does condemn the king's sons and the princes.

The Book

Zephaniah is a short book of three chapters, composed of 53 verses. It is not quoted or referred to in the New Testament but is readily accepted as inspired for several reasons: first, its message is in harmony with the other prophecies; second, it was included in the earliest Jewish canon of the Old Testament Scriptures and has always retained its place.

The Message

Zephaniah's message can easily be summed up in three ideas which are taken up more or less in the following

sequence: first, the threat of judgment upon the whole world, and particularly upon Judah (1:2-18); second, an exhortation to repentance and godly living (2:1-3); third, promise of the conversion of the world, restoration of Israel, and happiness in salvation (3:9-20).

Zephaniah's prophecies are vague compared to some of the other prophets. He seems more interested in God's provident use of punishment to bring about the world's conversion than in the specific means to obtain that end.

Judgment

The prevailing thought in the first section, if not the entire book, is one of judgment—of the "day of the Lord" in which Judah and Jerusalem will be punished. The prophet would teach these lessons concerning the judgment. The judgment is Divine; it is of God. God repeatedly says, "I will cut off," "I will utterly consume," etc. The judgment is universal. None shall escape the reckoning of the God of justice. All will be judged, from princes to servants (1:8-9). The judgment is also particular, though universal in scope. Individual awards and punishments will be meted out according to each one's deserts. The judgment will be complete and final. There is no recourse from the judgment of God. The judgment is rapidly approaching. (1:14).

The judgment of which Zephaniah spoke was fulfilled in Jerusalem's destruction and Judah's captivity. Still, we should be cognizant of the divine, universal, particular, complete, and final judgment swiftly approaching us.

In chapter 1:4-6, four classes of people are pointed out against whom God will stretch forth His hand of judg-

ment. Class one is the out-and-out idolaters—both the priests and their followers. Class two consists of those who try to divide their service between God and Baal or Malcham. Class three is the backsliders. Class four is the indifferent. God is still today against these four classes of people. We might especially notice the second class because many people today are trying to divide their loyalty between Christ and the things of this world. Christ says: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24).

Zephaniah 1:12 reads: "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps; and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil." There is a story of an old Greek philosopher who searched through the city with a candle during the daytime. When anyone would ask him what he was doing, he would reply: "Sir, I am seeking an honest man." Indeed, we can sympathize with him in that task. In this verse, however, God is represented as using the lamp to bring to light all the corruption of the people. Light reveals both the good and the bad without respect. Let us remember that the light of God's judgment shall shine upon us on that great and final day.

This verse also mentions "men that are settled on their lees." Wine that is allowed long to remain still settles, and the sediment is called the *lees*. The figure here is that many of the Israelites have so long been idle and indifferent in the Lord's work that they have settled on their lees—or, that is, they have

become encrusted and hardened in their indifference so their evil deeds stand as a testimony against them.

Exhortation to Repentance

In chapter 1, the prophet simply tells the people to “hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah” (1:7) and then warns them of the judgment to come. In his second discourse, he begins by telling the people to “gather yourselves together, yea, gather together” (2:1) and “seek ye Jehovah” (2:3). He not only tells them to seek the Lord but tells them how they must seek Him. The prophet says that to find God, one must “seek righteousness” and “seek meekness” (2:3). The prophet even suggests that the more pious Jews need to seek the Lord and find a closer relationship with Him. It teaches us that even though we regularly attend and participate in the church’s services, we may not be in a covenant relationship with our Lord.

Why should the people seek the Lord? The prophet answers this question with this reason: “It may be ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah’s anger” (2:3).

Sins of the People

As chapter 3:1-8 indicate, the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem needed to repent. The prophet charged them with inward defilement, “filthy and polluted”; outward tyranny, “the oppressing city”; and rebellion against God: “she obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in Jehovah.” Their princes were like “roaring lions,” devouring those they should protect. The judges were like greedy wolves. Her prophets were insincere. Her priests violated the very law they were appointed to expound and enforce. God told them, “Only fear thou me; receive correction,” that they might not be cut off, “but they rose early and corrupted all their doings.”

Jerusalem was following in the footsteps of Nineveh, who had placed her trust in her material greatness and had boasted: “I am, and there is none besides me” (2:15).

How many of these sins could be laid at our door today as a nation and a people?

One of the sins of the people was that of wearing “foreign apparel” (1:8). “Outward dress,” says Pusey, “always betokens the inward mind, and in its turn acts upon it.” The prophet uses foreign apparel to represent the inclination of the people of Judah and Jerusalem to look to and lean upon, to follow and copy the dress, customs, luxuries, and idolatries of the surrounding nations. Isaiah makes a similar charge when he speaks of the Jerusalem ladies distinguished for their gay attire and wanton hearts (Isa. 3:16-23). Indeed, clothes do many times reflect the inner condition of the heart. Today, when so large a sector of our population boldly parades themselves with practically nothing on their bodies, they seem to reveal the barrenness and emptiness of their souls. First Peter 3:3 and 1 Timothy 9:9-10 certainly teach Christians how they should dress—with modesty—to reflect the humble and sober Christian soul.

Hope for the Future

Zephaniah begins his third discourse, which is to give that ray of hope for the future without which God never leaves man, by saying: “Therefore wait ye for me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey” (Zep. 3:8). The prophet exhorts the righteous to put their trust in Jehovah because He will punish the wicked and bless the righteous in due time. This lesson is taught over and over throughout the Bible.

God promises a time when purity, humbleness, trustfulness, sincerity,

righteousness, and unity will characterize the people of God. These are the opposite traits from those characterizing the people in Zephaniah’s time.

A pure language is promised (3:9). Nothing reflects one’s spiritual and moral condition more than one’s language. “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat. 12:34). Therefore, conversion certainly should be accompanied by a change in one’s speech. Vulgar jests, coarse oaths, bestial cursing, foul name calling, slander, double-tongued utterances, vain and idle words, etc., must be put aside, and edifying speech uttered in humility must take their place. “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life” (Pro. 15:4—KJV).

God’s relationship to His people is defined in Zephaniah 3:17. God is in their midst. He will save them from fear, sin, and temptation. He delights over them with singing. Because of this full and tender relationship, the prophet says in 3:14 that the righteous should be glad and rejoice.

Concerning Christ

There are no direct references to Christ, but the prophet seems to speak of both the Jewish restoration from captivity and the times of the Messiah under the same imagery in several verses. The clearest reference to the oncoming Christian dispensation seems to be in 2:11. The object of true worship is given as being God. The place of worship is “everyone from his place.” One does not have to go to the tabernacle, temple, or Jerusalem to worship as under Judaism. The extent of true worship is given as being “even all the isles of the nations.” This is fulfilled in the carrying out of the Great Commission.

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What Is “Baptize America”?

Ray Brantley

Many Christians have been noticing signs on the side of the road with the text “Baptize America.” This phrase alone should be something that excites every Bible believing Christian. After all, it was Jesus Himself who said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat. 28:19-20). Unfortunately, there is more to the movement than the phrase itself. So, the question is, what is the “Baptize America” movement and are their teachings Biblical?

Before we can answer those questions, we need to look at some of the background of the movement. The first event of the movement was called “Baptize SoCal,” which was held in May 2023 where more than 4,000 people were baptized. The second event was called “Baptize California,” which was held in May 2024 where more than 12,000 people were baptized. Then the third and most recent event was held in June 2025 where more

than 25,000 people were baptized. If everything was done according to Scripture and these baptisms followed the will of God this event should be celebrated, but as we will see that is not the case.

The leader of this movement is named Mark Francey, and he is the preacher for the Oceans church in Irvine, California. Mark was involved in a documentary in which he shared where the idea for this event came from. Notice where the unbiblical background of this movement begins. According to Mark Francey, he was reading a book that told of a great water baptism that took place in Pirate’s Cove in 1990. This is when Mark said he was, “hit nearly in the chest, closed his eyes and saw a vision.” This vision was of a future event taking place at Pirate’s Cove where many would be baptized. Again, according to Mark, the Holy Spirit hit him right in the stomach and said, “Mark I want you to unite my church in California and I want you to actually do an event that gathers people around what we all agree on, which is water baptism.” The Holy Spirit allegedly continued, “Mark, my lost children, they

all know three things. They know Easter, they know Christmas, and they know water baptism.” The last thing that Mark claims to have heard from the Holy Spirit is that “These images from this event will go all over America and they will believe that if God can unite the church in California that He can unite the church in any state and in any country.”

There are so many things wrong with the statements Mark makes in this interview, but there are three areas that show unequivocally that this movement is not Biblical. The first is the vision itself, the second is the call for unity, and the third is the teaching on baptism itself.

When it comes to how God communicates His will to us, we must be honest and say that God has chosen to communicate to man through a number of different ways throughout history. In the garden of Eden, we see God walking through the garden and talking directly to Adam (Gen. 3:8-9). God spoke to Moses through an angel which appeared through the burning bush (Exo. 3:2-4). God spoke to Abraham through a vision (Gen. 15:1). God spoke to Abimelech

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Next in the list of tribes who came to David to make up his army is the tribe of Simeon. While it does not state a great deal about these men, the quality they possessed is extremely important. The text says, "Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred" (1 Chr. 12:25). While the Hebrew valour has a variety of meanings, the basic idea is "power, strength, brave" and is often translated as "armies, army." The idea presented by using valour is "exceptional or heroic courage when facing danger; especially in battle" (*Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*). What a wonderful quality these 7,100 soldiers possessed, and qualities needed in the Lord's church today.

Christians are to be courageous. As the apostle Paul was closing out his letter to the Corinthians, he gave five admonitions: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). The first four of these are military terms and while each admonition deserves its own attention, in this article we are concerned with the last two Paul gives here, "quit you like men" and "be strong." Quit you like men is one word in the Greek and defined as

"conduct oneself in a courageous way" (BDAG). Courage is defined by one as "That quality of mind which enables one to face dangers, difficulties, threats, pain, etc., without fear; bravery, boldness, intrepidity, pluck." Satan and his forces are strong and powerful. Peter describes him as a roaring lion. We cannot be cowards in the face of Satan, or he will devour us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

Prior to giving us the whole armor of God all Christians are to put on, notice how Paul describes our enemy and thus why we need that panoply of God: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). These terms (principalities, power, rulers) are not a description of weakness. This is why we must

take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (6:13-17).

Lack of courage is soundly condemned in the Scriptures. As Paul writes to the young preacher, his son in the faith, he states, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice or timidity]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound

mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). In the Revelation, John revealed the end of those who are cowardly when he wrote, "But the fearful [cowardly, timid], and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). The same word (different form) is used in both passages. These are "Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize" (Thayer). We can be certain our enemy in this spiritual warfare will throw everything in our way he possibly can in his attempt to destroy us (consider Job and all Satan threw at him).

Paul, in those military admonitions, also said we are to "be strong." The opposition today is as strong as ever and Satan still desires to devour us. Thus, we need to be strong, as William Barclay (*The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians*) wrote, "Like a well-equipped and well-trained soldier, be strong to fight for your King" (166). Christ is going into battle, and He will be victorious, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and cho-

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

sen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14). We are not strong in our own knowledge, wisdom, and strength, but we are to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10) knowing, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:10).

We know we can be strong and courageous because God is on our side. The Psalmist said, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psa. 27:1). The Hebrews’ writer said much the same thing as he wrote, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 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, as Christians, must have the courage and strength to boldly proclaim the Gospel of Christ. The apostles prayed, “that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (Acts 4:29) resulting in their speaking “the word of God with bold-

ness” (4:31). Immediately after Saul’s conversion, “he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus” (9:27) and then in Jerusalem, “he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him” (9:29). Even though his life was threatened, he continued to fight the good fight of the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). When Paul was in Corinth, Luke records the following:

And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles (Acts 18:4-6).

Not only do we need to have courage and strength to proclaim the Gospel, but we also have to defend the Gospel against false teachers. Peter mentions there were false prophets (teachers) in the past and makes application to his audience: “But there were false prophets also

among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). There are numerous other warnings given in the New Testament, but all one needs to do is open their eyes and we observe thousands of religious groups all claiming to be of Christ with each one teaching a different doctrine. Even in the Lord’s church today, any and every sort of doctrine can be found. Today, we must have elders, preachers, teachers, and members who have the strength and courage to stand against all these false doctrines whether in or out of the church.

The tribe of Simeon had men who were mighty men of valor. In the church today, we also need mighty men of valor, because we have a powerful enemy who wishes to devour us. Thus, let us be strong and courageous even as they.

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Continued from Page 1
through a dream (Gen. 20:3-6). Then, throughout the books of prophecy of the Old Testament, God speaks to groups of people through His chosen prophets. God even tells Jeremiah that he will be His mouth to the Israelites (Jer. 25:19-20). So, God does have the power to speak to mankind through any means that He chooses.

So, “How does God speak to us today?” What we see is that during the first century the Bible clearly documents a change in the way that God has chosen to speak to man. The book of Matthew tells us, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat. 7:28-29). When Jesus came, He spoke with an authority from

God the likes of which man had never seen before. The Hebrews’ writer explains it well when He writes, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1-2). So, God no longer speaks to us through visions, dreams, or prophets, but He speaks

to us through the teachings of His dear Son.

Why then are so many people confused about this? Why do people still believe God speaks to man through visions and dreams today? The simplest reason for this is that Jesus ascended back into heaven and is no longer with us confirmed in (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Thankfully, the Bible also clearly deals with Jesus' absence when it comes to how God communicates to us today.

Jesus taught on a couple of different occasions that He had passed His authority of teaching the message of God to His chosen apostles. Just after Jesus questioned His apostles about who men were saying that He was, He posed the same question to the apostles. Peter answered for the group by saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We then see Jesus' response to this answer in Matthew 16:17-19. Notice the transfer of authority in verse nineteen which says, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then, as Jesus is about to ascend back to heaven, He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Mat. 16:18-20). These chosen followers of Jesus had a unique ability to speak for God because Jesus gave them authority to do so and then

promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to remind them what they should say and to guide them into all truth. (John 14:26; 16:13; Luke 12:11-12).

This leads to the logical question, was this authority passed from the apostles to other Christians and does the line continue even to today? The best way to answer this is to allow the Bible to speak for itself. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:18-19). Then the same man, led by the same Spirit, wrote in a parallel passage in his letter to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:16-17). These parallel passages show that being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly are used interchangeably.

When we add to these passages such as 1 Corinthians 13, which tells of the miraculous abilities given through the Holy Spirit vanishing away when that which is perfect, the full revelation from God, has come, we see that God speaks to us today not through prophets, visions, or dreams. Instead, God now speaks to us

through the words of His dear Son and the apostles to whom He granted authority to speak on His behalf through the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that the leader of the "Baptize America" movement is lying about where He came up with the idea for the movement and the visions he received, which does not bode well for the movement itself being from God.

The next thing that is problematic about Mark's statement about where he got the idea for the movement has to do with the supposed call for unity. The unity that Mark describes is a unity in diversity, because it is only uniting around a singular idea from Scripture rather than uniting on all Scripture. To be fair, there is a Biblical teaching about unity in diversity. Scripture shows us that all nations, races, and both sexes are invited to be an equal part of the Lord's church (Gal. 3:28). Paul also teaches about Christian liberties being a reality such as the eating of meats principle in Romans 14. These are areas where there is no specific law on a subject, so Christians must make a choice and sometimes our choices are different regarding authorized matters. These differences on topics where liberty is allowed do not get rid of the true unity of the church. True unity in diversity is being united despite outside differences and being united despite differing opinions on areas of Christian liberty.

The unity in diversity which Mark Francey claims is being done in the "Baptize America" movement does not align with the unity of diversity in Scripture. The Bible clearly shows us that subjects where there is a law, a system of

doctrine, handed down by Christ and the apostles are areas where no diversity of opinion can exist. These are areas where we must transform our opinions to align with the true teaching of the Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 1:10-11, Paul writes, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” Paul then goes on to discuss the division that has arisen based on who was superior because of who baptized them. Paul reminds them that this is foolish, that they are on the same team and who baptizes them does not matter, they need to remain united. Then, in chapter five, Paul is discussing something sinful that is taking place in their midst, a fornication so bad that it is not even named among the Gentiles. He then tells that the one who is committing this sin is openly boasting about it and that they are to deliver this person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved (1 Cor. 5:5). They are later told to purge out the leaven, and not to keep company with fornicators. The reasoning for this is that when one sins so openly, they have already made the choice to separate themselves from God, so the believer in withdrawing from them is not the one causing the division. There is to be no unity in diversity when one is doing or teaching things contrary to Scripture.

When we apply this teaching to the “Baptize America” movement, we can see that their call for unity, because they happen to agree on a singular Biblical subject while teaching other false doctrines, is not true Biblical unity. In fact, it is something else entirely that Jesus warns about near the end of His famous “Sermon on the Mount.” Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). We then see this same warning appear again and again throughout Scripture. Jesus later said, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (24:4-5). John likewise wrote, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). People like Mark Francey and the “Baptize America” group who teach contrary to Scripture are called antichrists and are to be marked and avoided.

What would God say if we ignored these warnings and joined ourselves to a movement led by a false prophet based on unity of one subject? Scripture shows us that God would not look happily on such a thing. This interdenominational unity that is called for is nothing more than a call for the faithful to participate in unequally yoking themselves together with unbelievers, which is condemned (2 Cor. 6:14).

The sad reality is that although the leader of the movement, Mark Francey, claims that we all agree on water baptism, he and the Ocean’s Church of which he is a part do not

teach true Biblical baptism. Nailing down exactly what they teach on baptism is not an easy thing to do. This is because they call for people to be baptized but never actually say why someone should be baptized. This should be an immediate cause for concern to anyone thinking about joining this group. If a person or group of people call you to do something in the name of God but never provide you with why God commanded such a thing, it should cause you to be on alert.

If one were to go to the “Ocean’s Church” website, and go to the “about” page, they would find a section telling what this group believes. In this section is a drop-down tab titled “Salvation.” Here it says, “The blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, provides the only way of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. Salvation occurs when people place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as sufficient payment for their sin. Salvation is a gift from God, and it cannot be earned through our own efforts.”

There is clearly a lot of reformation language in this statement of belief on the area of salvation, but what we see lacking is any mention of baptism or how one comes into contact with the saving blood of Jesus Christ. The most dangerous thing about this statement is that it is filled with truths from Scripture while systematically leaving out certain parts that the group does not agree with. Based on the glaring absence of baptism in this statement, we can safely assume that this group does not teach baptism as being necessary for salvation, in fact every Scripture reference they provide conve-

niently stops just before the verse which mentions baptism.

One thing that is clear is that the Ocean's Church picture of salvation does not match with the Biblical picture of salvation. The Word of God teaches that one must first hear the Word of God and believe it to be saved (Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 1:16; Heb. 11:6). It also clearly tells us the importance of calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-10, 13-15). At the same time Scripture shows that one must repent of sins and be baptized to be saved from sin (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is no more or less important than every other thing listed in the New Testament as being necessary for salvation. However, it is necessary just like faith, repentance and confession.

So, the very first thing that Mark Francey and the "Baptize America" movement gets wrong about baptism is that it is necessary for salvation. The next thing that they get wrong about baptism is the immediate nature of baptism which is taught in Scripture. According to an article put out by "TheWordOrlando.com," Mark said, "Ultimately, our desire is to make the Day of Pentecost the day that Christen-

dom celebrates water baptism." So, this is an event where for months or even a full year in advance they call people to be baptized and determine to baptize them at a specific day in the future. We can never see this anywhere in Scripture.

In every single conversion account of the Bible, we see the person or people baptized immediately upon their realization that they need to be in order to be saved. It is immediate because they realize they are lost and want to remedy that situation immediately not some day far out in the future. Acts 2 tells us that the same day in which these people were convicted by Peter's words 3,000 of them were baptized (2:41). In Acts 8, as Philip is teaching the Ethiopian eunuch about Jesus, the man asks what is hindering him from being baptized. Philip tells him that if he believes he may which causes the man to make a confession about Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, and immediately they stop the chariot, go down into the water, and Philip baptizes him (8:36-38). He could have waited till they finished their journey or until he got home so his family and friends could witness his baptism, but he did not, he was baptized immedi-

ately. Likewise, the Philippian jailor was baptized in the middle of the night, the same hour that he believed (16:30-33). He did not wait until the jail was secure after the earthquake, he did not wait for a decent hour, no, he was baptized immediately. The idea of waiting for a big event to baptize people shows a complete misunderstanding of the importance of baptism that is shown in Scripture.

Overall, the "Baptize America" movement seems like a great thing at the surface level. However, when we look into the movement and their teachings, we see false prophets, false teachings about unity, and false teachings surrounding the Biblical doctrine of baptism. Sadly, this movement has baptized nearly 40,000 people, which means they have deceived that many people and given those people a false sense of their salvation and eternal security, which is an extremely dangerous thing that will lead many souls to a devastating end. May God bring the false teachings of this group to light so they can lead no more astray and hopefully those who have been led astray may find their way to God and true Biblical teachings.

Pensacola, FL

Does It Make Any Difference?

C. D. Plum

We have almost any number of false teachers in the world today that are saying, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe and practice in religion; just so you think it is all right, it is all right." Is this teaching true? This teaching is emphatically not true. I hear this

false teacher saying, "This way to Christ," and another false teacher saying, "No, this way to Christ," and when cornered, both of these false teachers say, "it doesn't make any difference."

I propose to show in this article that it does make some difference

as to what we believe and practice in religion. There were religious people on earth before Jesus came to earth. If it does not make any difference what people believe and practice in religion, why did Jesus not stay in heaven and just let these people alone?

Even before Jesus came to earth, why did God change the Patriarchal form of religion to the Jewish religion, if it does not make any difference what people believe and practice in religion? And if it does not make any difference what people practice in religion, why did Jesus abolish the Jewish religion, and establish the Christian religion? These questions should cause the honest hearted among us to think, and to understand that it does make a difference what people believe and practice in religion.

When Jesus was on earth, He found at least four prominent Jewish denominations: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essences. If it does not make any difference what people believe and practice in religion, why did Jesus not become a member of all or each of these denominations? He rejected every one of them. Their doctrine did not suit Him. Their doctrine would not save them or others. How do I know their doctrine would not save? I know it because Jesus said so. Hear Him: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mat. 23:15). These false religionists are great missionaries. But, most assuredly, they are not God's preachers.

Why did our Lord say, "Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees," if it did not make any difference what people believed and practiced in religion? If it did not make any difference, Jesus was showing partiality. "But there is no respect of persons with God." If all religions are right, God would accept them all.

Though the world was full of one kind of religion or another in Christ's day, yet, Christ said to His preachers, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). This would be a peculiar thing to do if it did not make any difference what people believed and practiced in religion, do you not think? Not only did Jesus send His preachers, with His message, into all the world, but taught the apostles of His to teach the people they will be saved if they obey this message and will be damned if they do not. Where are the eyes, and the minds, of these false teachers, that they cannot see in this that it does make a difference what people believe and practice in religion?

Our Lord further warned the people: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" It does make a difference. We must "hear" and "heed" what Jesus says. Either this or condemnation.

The apostle of our Lord said: But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

What talk is this, if a thing is all right, just so we think it is all right? Note these thoughts: "False teachers with damnable heresies" and "many shall follow their pernicious ways," would not all this be unnecessary talk if it does not make any difference what you believe in reli-

gion? Additionally, note this thought: "False teachers with pernicious ways [plural]" and "By reason of whom the way [singular] of truth shall be evil spoken of." What nonsense this would be if all religions are right.

Then, in the day of judgment, if all religions are right, why would Jesus reject any? Yes, why would He reject honest, sincere, conscientious religious people, if all religions are right? Yes, He will do that very thing, for He said He would. Here is what will be said to Him by religious people in the day of judgment. "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And here is what the Lord will say to those who are religiously wrong: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:22-23). There is no doubt about it, friends, it is not enough to be religious to be saved, we must be religiously right.

To this I might add, it is not enough to be a member of a church to be saved, we must be a member of the right church. I am well aware of the dust false teachers will kick up over this statement, but after the dust settles, which they make, the truth of the statement I have made here, still stands, and will stand for ever.

Deceased

[Editor's note: even though this appeared in *The Gospel Guardian* in 1956, it is just as applicable for us today as so many believe the false ideas that it does not make any difference. Today it often goes by the phraseology of "my truth" and "your truth."]

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The Lord's Word No Longer has any Impact on People Today

Paul Vaughn

It is tragic for men when God's Word does not take root in their heart. People began to grow wicked, vile, and repulsive until they lose their moral direction for life. "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4). The Psalmist wrote his words of wisdom thousands of years ago, but he describes the majority of souls today who have no thoughts of God, or who twist His Words to man-made opinions of hollowed wisdom, which cannot comfort those lost in sin.

What caused this attitude of a Godless society drifting on a sea of filth that brings dishonor to God and mankind? How long has this attitude of sin been growing in the hearts of men? The writer of Psalm 119 saw the carelessness of the people in his time. He did not understand why God's Word did not impact them for good: "My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words" (119:139). He could not understand or fathom a people rejecting the blessings from God. The masses had emptied their minds of God and His righteousness, and it

broke his heart. "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law" (119:136).

It is a sad commentary on society that the majority of people have not paid careful attention to the wonderful Words of truth in the Scriptures. Instead, they are moving at breakneck speed away from God and toward destruction! This is nothing new, for mankind has always drifted from God.

In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, religion had degenerated into moral decay and perverted worship. The priests became corrupt in their service to God. The carelessness of Nadab and Abihu cost them greatly; they were consumed by fire. "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1-2). They did not show respect to God and His Word. Their attitudes did not regard God as holy (10:3).

Isaiah saw the empty and loveless hearts of the Jews take God out of their lives. "And He said, 'Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 'Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed" (Isa. 6:9-10). Turning from God left them spiritually bankrupt, looking to a future of darkness that led to Babylon.

Amos, a contemporary to Isaiah, spoke of the destruction of both the Southern and Northern kingdoms (Judah and Israel), because of their rejection of God. Judah would be punished "because they have despised the law of the LORD" (Amos 2:4). Israel was greedy and perverted, turning from the righteousness to be in violation of God's way of truth. "They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, To defile My holy name" (2:7). Israel and Judah were going to be

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Another tribe who came to David at the beginning of his reign were soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Since we have already dealt with the tribe of Judah, in this article I want to center upon the tribe of Benjamin. Notice what the inspired writer records:

And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if *ye be come* to betray me to mine enemies, seeing *there is* no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look *thereon*, and rebuke *it*. Then the spirit came upon Amasai, *who was* chief of the captains, *and he said*, Thine *are we*, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace *be* unto thee, and peace *be* to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band (1 Chr. 12:16-18).

Amasai was the spokesman and leader (chief of the captains) for these two tribes. Later in the chapter, we are given this additional information about the tribe of Benjamin, "And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul" (12:29).

The first thing Amasai said was, "Thine *are we*" (12:18). He was establishing that they belonged to David. They were surrendering totally to him. The previous king, Saul, was from the tribe of Benjamin, and they had been loyal to him. Thus, when they come to David, he goes out to meet them and asks them if they were coming in peace or to betray him. Amasai responds they are David's.

We, as Christians, are to belong to our King Jesus. We are His by right of creation. After an object lesson given to Jeremiah, he records, "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so *are ye* in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:5-6). Paul uses the same figure when he writes, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:20-21). God created us (Gen. 1), thus He can do what He wills with us. We belong to Him by right of creation.

We also belong to Him by right of purchase price. Paul writes, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). Later, he would state, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (7:23). Peter would add, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your

fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Our Lord and Savior was willing to leave the beauty of Heaven and His equality with the Father (Phi. 2:6-7) to come to this earth to redeem sinful man back to God. By that right of purchase price, His own precious blood, we belong to Him.

Belonging to the Christ, we are to surrender wholly to Him. Notice again Paul's statement, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). We surrender body and spirit to God in glorifying Him. Paul says we are a peculiar people, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14). *Peculiar* has reference to "of one's own possession" with specific reference that we are God's possession. Christ redeemed us to become His possession. The Hebrews' writer adds, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14). After our obedience in baptism and being purged from our sins, we then serve God. Paul would ask the

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

question, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16). To whom do we yield ourselves servants to obey? We often sing the song, “All to Jesus I Surrender,” but do we really mean it or are we just giving lip service to surrendering to Jesus? These Benjaminites were telling David they belonged to him and would surrender wholly to him.

Then Amasai said they were on David’s side. There was no question as to where they stood and what or who they stood for. We need brethren whom like these Benjaminites are on God’s side and there is no question where they stand. We often face those who are on the wrong side, and these must be fought. We must not extend peace to them as Amasai extended to David. These are individuals who we war against. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Mat. 12:30). Amasai and the Benjaminites knew there was no middle ground, and one was either on David’s side, or they were not. This was even more important when we consider the Benjaminites were of the same tribe as Saul. “And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul” (1 Chr. 12:29). They did not allow kinship and their past service to Saul to prevent them from doing right. Jesus would say:

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her

mother in law. And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Maat. 10:35-37).

Christians today must not allow kinship to prevent them from doing right and obeying God. Sadly, many seem to put family first before God, but that is not acceptable to Him.

We have far too many today who have never really gotten on the Lord’s side. They desire to receive the rewards of being on the Lord’s side, yet they are still friends with the world. James writes, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). They still love the world and the things of the world, “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). We must do as Paul stated, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:1-3). Some, as Christians, have never learned to die to self and set their affections on spiritual matters. Ultimately, they become like enemies and must be fought against. We need Christians that you know where they stand and no one needs to know where they stand.

The last thing we notice is they extended peace to David and his helpers. Amasai and the Ben-

jaminites were not there to cause trouble. They were going to be peacemakers both between David and themselves and within David’s helpers. They realized who the enemy was and who the enemy was not. Sadly, many Christians seem to forget who the real enemy is. Obviously, there are traitors to the cause of Christ; those trying to undermine Christ and the church. These must be vigorously opposed and fought against using every rightful method we have available. Yet, it sometimes appears that some brethren get into such a fighting mode, they lose sight of who the real enemy is. There often ends up fighting and squabbling among those who are faithful over some matter of disagreement that should be worked out privately. We need to take heed of Paul’s words, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15). Many brethren are biting and devouring one another and being consumed of each other. We cannot fight the real enemy because we are consumed with fighting each other. This should not be.

Of great interest is the conclusion Amasai draws when he says, “God helpeth thee.” This is not a plea to God to help David and his helpers, but instead it is a statement that God would be doing this. It is an assurance of David’s success because God has helped. One stated it would be better to translate it as, “God has helped you,” which is more the way other translations have handled it (it is a Qal perfect stem generally viewed as completed or finished action). Likewise, Christians must recognize that God has helped us. Without His merciful help, no one would be

saved (Tit. 2:11). He has helped us in giving us His way so we might be pleasing to Him. Then no one knows what Deity is doing for man behind the scenes—Providence. God works on our behalf, “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). How and what all He does for us, no one knows. We also are told about the angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). Paul’s state-

ment sums it up well, “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:31, 37). What a blessing it is to know that God has helped and is helping us.

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Continued from Page 1
punished because the Word of God no longer had any impact on them.

In the New Testament

The history of spiritual decay grew as the church matured. People lost their souls because God’s Word lost its impact on them. Paul warned the powers of darkness would come and cause harm from every direction. To the elders at Ephesus, he warned against those merchants of evil. “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30).

In the last few hours of Jesus’ life, He established the “Lord’s Supper.” During this very special time the powers of darkness were working to destroy the Son of God. Jesus announced that one of His disciples was working to cause harm. “Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me’” (Mat. 26:21). Judas had sold his soul for “thirty pieces of silver” (27:3-5). He refused to let the Lord’s Word make an impact on his heart. Jesus had warned against the love of money and the dangers that come from it. “No one can serve two masters; for either he

will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). It is very dangerous to turn one’s heart from the Words of Life.

About AD 90 the church was assaulted by Diotrephes because he wanted the “top spot” in the congregation. John said, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church” (3 John 9-10). There is only One who has the seat of preeminence in the church of Christ. Paul wrote, “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Diotrephes refused to let God’s Word make an impact on his heart for good. Sadly, there are too many “Diotrephes” in the church today.

Spiritual Decay Continues to Advance Today

Religion has degenerated and degraded into empty emotionalism and entertainment. Worship is

filled with a descent into the darkness of sin because men refuse to let God’s Word make an impact on their hearts. Men and women rely on their emotions and shadows of their hearts to establish the standards of *worship* instead of the Lord and His teaching. God has never allowed men or women to establish the pattern of worship. Jesus said, “God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The proper attitude of reverence is required as well as the Words of Truth, the Scriptures (17:17). Without respect for God, His Words will not make an impact on “religious people,” allowing them to wander into self-imposed religion and traditions of men. Paul also warned against following the traditions of men. “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8).

Spiritual decay has turned multitudes away from God, and His Word no longer has any impact on families in this present age. Regrettably, families are turning way from God. Why? Children are not being taught the Words of life which can lead them to spiritual growth. Parents are leaving their children to a

Godless society to raise them. It has always been the goal of God for parents to teach their children to respect God and His teaching. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deu. 6:6-7). In the New Testament, Paul reinforces this parental responsibility to their children. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: *that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.* And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training

and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4). It is no wonder that people of all ages are turning from God and His Word. They have never been taught to respect God from their youth. The foundation was not set up for spiritual food to guide young people in their formative days and masses are starving for the one thing that will enrich their lives and lead them to God. The wickedness that is flourishing in our communities today can be traced right to the abandonment of God in our homes. “The curse of the Lord *is* on the house of the wicked, But He blesses the home of the just” (Pro. 3:33).

Conclusion

Throughout the entire world the epidemic of sin has filled the hearts of mankind with confusion, hostility, hate and violence. They are all

traceable to one fundamental cause, a people who have turned their backs on God. The majority of society has turned from God! “*There is no fear of God before their eye*” (Rom. 3:18).

There is still hope! God yet desires for humanity to come to Him. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God has done His part, now it is up to man to desire to come to Him. To come to God requires humility on the part of man. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Hopkinsville, KY

Is Everything a Christian does Worship

Lee Moses

Is everything a Christian does worship? Some would answer this question with an emphatic “Yes!” They see a life given over to the Lord as perpetual worship, regardless of what a person may do at a particular time. Some will make an exception for sin; that is, if a Christian is not sinning, he is worshipping. But, if a manager is giving instructions to an employee, is he worshipping at that moment? If that manager is a Christian, some would affirm, “Yes!” If a grocery store shopper is deciding between Lucky Charms and Frosted Flakes, is he worshipping at that moment? If that shopper is a Christian, some would again affirm, “Yes!” If someone is using the restroom, is he worship-

ping at that very moment? If that person is a Christian, the same folks would answer, “Yes, he is, and very acceptably!” This is sometimes known as the “All of Life is Worship” (ALW) doctrine.

On the surface, this view seems harmless enough. However, this doctrine bears grave consequences. Consider just two of these consequences:

1. If everything a Christian does is worship, then anything a Christian is permitted to do **outside** of the worship assembly is permitted **in** the worship assembly and as part of the worship activities.
2. If everything a Christian does is worship, then there is noth-

ing extraordinary about the occasions a congregation assembles for worship.

Not only are these consequences serious—both conclusions are false. There are things permitted for a Christian outside the worship assembly that are not permitted in the worship assembly and as part of the worship activities: “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). It is false to suggest that there is nothing extraordinary about the occasions a congregation assembles for worship—as the Hebrews writer issued a dire warning against any who might be “forsak-

ing the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25ff).

The rules of logic demand, “Any doctrine that implies a false doctrine is itself false.” Since the doctrine that everything a Christian does is worship implies the two aforementioned false doctrines, the doctrine that everything a Christian does is worship is itself false.

ALW adherents use various *sugar stick* Scriptures to justify their doctrine.

One such passage is “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17). Since it is impossible for a Christian to offer continuous focused prayer 24 hours a day for weeks, months, and years on end without pause, some conclude that this “prayer without ceasing” is something other than a specific act. However, *pray* means specifically “to petition deity,” to be translated as “pray” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 879). That is pretty specific, is it not? It will not allow such interpretations as “maintain a prayerful attitude” or “live the kind of life befitting a man of prayer.” It means “pray.” That one is to “pray without ceasing” does not mean that one is to pray every minute of his life. It means prayer will be a regular, ongoing part of his life. Similarly, if someone decides to become physically fit, he may determine to implement an exercise regimen. To achieve and maintain physical fitness, he must “exercise without ceasing.” This does not mean that he is to exercise every minute of his life; instead, exercise must remain a regular, ongoing part of his life. When Christians “continue steadfastly...in prayers,” as did the early

church (Acts 2:42), they “pray without ceasing.”

Perhaps the favorite *sugar stick* of the ALW bunch is Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*” Going from this passage to “every single thing you do is worship seems quite a stretch.” However, ALW advocates have misleading modern translations to aid their detrimental cause.

The New International Version incorrectly renders Romans 12:1: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God —this is **your true and proper worship.**”

If one’s “true and proper worship” is found in how one lives his life, then select actions could not be set apart from the others as acts of worship. As some have claimed, there could not even be different “levels” of worship.

The Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the English Standard Version likewise render the King James and American Standard Versions’ “service” as “worship.” The original word *latreia* and its related verb *latreuo* signify “work for pay, be in servitude, render cultic service” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 587). While this range of meaning certainly **includes** worship, it is not **limited to** worship. Jesus used this word in John 16:2: “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service [*latreia*].” Clearly, no

Jew would have considered it an act of **worship** to kill a Christian, but they would have considered it an act of **service**. Thus, “service” is the preferred rendering in John 16:2, just as in Romans 12:1. Christians need to understand the distinction between worship and service. As many a faithful Gospel preacher has correctly observed, “All worship is service, but not all service is worship.”

Some argue specifically from the word *sacrifice* in Romans 12:1—“present your bodies a living **sacrifice.**” Such people claim that *sacrifice* itself **implies** worship; therefore, the “living sacrifice” of our bodies—an ongoing event from initial obedience to the Gospel until physical death—must be worship. An allusion to worship is indeed made in this term and verse. However, one must observe that this *sacrifice* is clearly **figurative**. Literally speaking, what is a *sacrifice*? It is “an **act** of slaughtering an animal or person or surrendering a possession as an offering to God or to a divine or supernatural figure” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*, emph. LM). The allusion in Romans 12:1 is indeed to slaughtering animals as sacrifice, and the irony of the figure is that **living** sacrifices are presented rather than dead animals.

Furthermore, this says, “**Present** your bodies a living sacrifice.” While those bodies may be used in continuous service, one’s body is presented at a particular time, just as ancient animal sacrifices were offered at a particular time.

Twenty-four verses following this verse, the civil government is said to be “God’s minister;” specifically when carrying out

capital punishment against a deserving wrongdoer (13:4). But is this an act of **worship**? Unless one wants to affirm that God desires human sacrifice as worship, indeed, it is not.

One may render the entirety of his life in **service** to God, but he is not worshipping when he is not participating in an act of worship. *Worship* occurs 188 times in the Bible. Every time, it involves a specific action performed by one and directed toward another.

Notice the words spoken when Abraham and Isaac arrived at Mount Moriah: “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5). According to the ALW folks, Abraham was confused. Did he not know that he was worshipping the whole time he traveled to Mount Moriah? He should have said, “I and the lad will go yonder and continue worshipping the same way we have been for years”! No, Abraham was correct, and the ALW folks are confused. Even though Abraham lived a life of faith to be emulated by Christians everywhere (Rom. 4:9-16), he only worshipped when he offered specific acts of worship.

Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch “had come to Jerusalem for to worship” (Acts 8:27). The implication is clear that his entire life was not worship if he traveled to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of worshipping.

On one occasion, Jesus was in the household of two sisters, each engaged in different activities. One, Martha, was busily preparing for her guests while the other, Mary, attentively listened to Jesus

as He taught. Notice Jesus’s distinction between these two sisters’ actions: “Mary hath chosen the good part” (Luke 10:42). Neither action was sinful. However, if Martha’s course was properly **worship**, how could it fail to be every bit as much “the good part” as Mary’s?

There is a **relationship** between holy living and acceptable worship, but they are not identical. God has always made clear that worship cannot please Him when offered by someone living an unholy life:

The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: But the prayer of the upright *is* his delight (Pro. 15:8).

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer *shall be* abomination (28:9).

Note the distinction above between the holy living—or unholy living, as the case may be—and the acts of worship, here, sacrifice and prayer.

When Satan attempted to entice Christ to worship him, our Lord responded, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat. 4:10). When Christ was speaking to Satan, was He worshipping him? Of course not—His words were a refusal to render worship to him.

Make no mistake: many who advocate the ALW doctrine do so with ulterior motives. Some seek to make the worship assemblies less formal. One ALW advocate states of the first-century church, “This first day of the week assembly was as unstructured and informal as an unplanned reunion of college friends” (Root 50-51). At

times, worship assemblies in the first century **were** unstructured and informal (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26-38). However, this was displeasing to God, and the inspired apostle Paul took to task such lackadaisical attitudes toward worship. As Paul wrote, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (14:40).

A particular goal of ALW advocates is to allow innovations in worship, including instrumental music and expanded women’s roles. If a man may play his piano at home, why may he not play in the assemblies of the church, since both situations are equally worship? If a mother may speak at her local PTA meeting, why may she not preach during the public *worship* service, since both occasions are just as surely worship?

This is not to say that all who advocate the ALW doctrine have such goals in mind. Some, perhaps honestly but erroneously, have concluded that all of life is worship. Nonetheless, all who push the ALW doctrine end up moving the church in the direction of such godlessness.

Not everything a Christian does is worship. The Bible does not teach any such thing, and the implications of this doctrine are grave. Let Christians everywhere render their lives as living sacrifices to Almighty God and delight on every occasion to offer worship pleasing to God.

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Jesus Teaches True Greatness

R. L. Whiteside

Text: Mark 9:33-39; 10:13-16, 42-45.

After a man brought his son who had a “dumb spirit” to the apostles and they could not cast it out, when Jesus came from the mount of transfiguration, He cast the *spirit* out of the boy. Jesus and His disciples then came down through Galilee; “and he would not that any man should know *it*” (Mark 9:30). On the way He again told His disciples of His coming death and resurrection, but they were so full of their own ideas about a worldly kingdom and places of honor in that kingdom that what He said made no impression on them. It is not surprising that they thought the kingdom of Christ would be a worldly kingdom, for they knew of no other sort and could not as yet conceive of any other sort. In such kingdoms there are places of honor, and naturally they wonder which of them would occupy the highest places. They were much like politicians of today disputing about who was best fitted to occupy the highest place of honor. This disputing among themselves occurred along

the way to Capernaum. “And they came to Capernaum” (9:33).

If it seems to the student that Matthew’s account and Mark’s do not agree, he should remember that each writer gives only a condensed report. When they were in the house the disciples asked Jesus: “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Of course, they did not intend that Jesus should know that they had been disputing among themselves on that very point, but by a question Jesus gave them to understand that He knew about their discussion: “What were ye reasoning on the way?” (9:33). That question shamed them into silence. Then Jesus sat down and called the twelve about Him and said to them: “If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all” (9:35). There is a difference between being counted the greatest and really being the greatest. The Pharisees loved to be considered great and to have the chief places in any gathering, but they knew not in what greatness consisted. Jesus said to them: “Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is ex-

alted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). To seek the glory of men utterly unfits one for being a true believer in Christ Jesus and for a place in the kingdom of heaven. “How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that *cometh* from the only God ye seek not?” (John 5:44). The disciples had not learned that the greatest servant is the greatest person in the sight of God. Man’s acclaim does not recommend a man to God. Humility and a willingness to serve wherever one can be of most use, no matter how lowly the service may be, is true greatness.

Jesus would give an object lesson to these ambitious disciples, an example of what they at heart should be. “He took a little child, and set him in the midst of them” (Mark 9:36). Matthew says He called to Him a child; the child was, therefore, old enough to come at His bidding. According to Matthew, Jesus first said: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child,

Continued on Page 4



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

Another tribe which the writer lists for us in coming to David is the tribe of Levi. There is not a lot said about the Levites. It simply says, "Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred. And Jehoiada *was* the leader of the Aaronites, and with him *were* three thousand and seven hundred" (1 Chr. 12:26-27). The children of Levi were the priestly tribe. Under the New Testament system, every Christian is a priest. Peter writes, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ... But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). The Hebrews' writer teaches us the duty of priests (in particular High Priest) was to "offer gifts and sacrifices" (Heb. 5:1; 8:3).

Paul, as he writes by inspiration to the Roman brethren and us, discusses the sacrifices we are to make when he writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). While the sacrifices of the Old Testament

were animal sacrifices which were slaughtered prior to the sacrifice, Paul now reveals that Christians, since each one is a priest of God, was to offer not a dead animal but our own body to Him. Consider *present* as we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. In the Greek it is an aorist verb which deals with action that has been completed. The question comes, "when do we perform this action of presenting our body as a living sacrifice?" The answer to this question has already been given by the apostle when he discusses being freed from sin in Romans 6. In the act of baptism, we die to sin and live a new life. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (6:3-4). We are told, "that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (6:6). He continues on saying, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (6:11-12). Then in verses 13 through 19 Paul uses a form of this same word, *present*, five times and each time translated *yield*. Notice how they parallel in that we are presenting our body as a living sacrifice when we are baptized into Christ, dying to the old man of sin and now yielding our bodies to righteousness to God.

Neither **yield** ye your members as

instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.... Know ye not, that to whom ye **yield** yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?... I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have **yielded** your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now **yield** your members servants to righteousness unto holiness (6:13, 16, 19).

In yielding our body as an instrument of righteousness, we are presenting our body as a living sacrifice. Prior to baptism our body had been given over to unrighteousness and sin. In that act of baptism, we are changing our state and making a presentation of our body to God. As we present our body to God, we obey Him by living as a sacrifice to God.

While Paul was writing to the Corinthians encouraging them to follow through with the support they had promised, he uses the Macedonians as an example of sacrificial giving and says they were able to give abundantly even while in deep poverty themselves because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

God” (2 Cor. 8:5). When we learn this principle of presenting our body as a living sacrifice, then no matter what area of discussion, such as giving or service, it will be using our body to God’s service.

As priests, Peter said we are to offer sacrifices, but the sacrifices Christians offer are to be spiritual sacrifices. The Hebrews’ writer in giving some general exhortations, writes regarding these sacrifices Christians make, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:15-16). Of the word translated *praise*, Louw-Nida says, “to speak of the excellence of.” Here the writer mentions “the fruit of our lips.” As we sing songs of praise to God, we are offering the sacrifice of praise to God. Notice Paul in writing of our singing states:

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

The way some people sing, or try not to sing, God would not be pleased with their sacrifice. No, I am not speaking of a person’s ability to carry a tune, the melodic accuracy, etc. I am speaking of the person who is singing from the heart, who means what he is singing and sings enthusiastically. We need to remember we are serv-

ing as a priest of God in offering up the song we are singing.

Another way we offer these sacrifices of praise to God is through prayer. Prayer is often associated with the giving of thanks. “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi. 4:6). “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 The. 5:17-18). Giving praise to Yahweh is also an integral part of prayer. As one put it, “Ultimately, praise is about giving recognition to God for who He is, elevating our mind and heart to glorify Him.” Think back to all the Psalms which are psalms of praise to Him and the glorifying of God and His greatness. As Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He began that model prayer with a statement of greatness by saying, “Hallowed by thy name” (Mat. 6:9).

However, prayer is also associated with warfare. When the Israelites were allowed to return from their Babylonian captivity, they were allowed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Yet, they faced great opposition to their work. The opposition was led by Sanballat and Tobiah who did everything in their power to put a stop to the work. Nehemiah prays to God asking Him to punish their enemies (Neh. 4:4-5). Then, these two working with other nations conspired to fight against Jerusalem to prevent the completion of the wall. We then read, “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them” (4:9).

With the Lord’s help and the Israelites work, they completed the wall and did so in 52 days.

We again see the connection between prayer and being a soldier who is well armed for the battle in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. As Paul is encouraging them, and us, to put on the whole armor of God so they can stand against the wiles of the devil, he tells them of the strength of the enemy and then lists the armor we are to put on.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:14-17).

Immediately after setting forth the Christian’s armor, he then shows the need for prayer in relationship to this fight by adding, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (6:18). Prayer is directly connected to fighting against evil forces. Without prayer, we will fail. We see this take place when Jesus returns from praying, to Peter, James, and John and finds them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat. 26:41). Jesus went away to pray and when He returned, He again found them asleep. A short time later, Peter denied the Lord three times. He failed to “watch and pray” with the sinful, shameful result.

Prayer must be an integral part of the army of God. As priests, each one can go to throne of grace

(Heb. 4:16) through our one mediator, Jesus the Christ, and find help in time of need. As the men of Ne-

hemiah's day, let us have the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God in one hand and the prayers of

the saints in the other and like the Israelites we can and will defeat the enemy.

MH

Continued from Page 1
the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3-4). We are not to be like children in all respects. "Brethren, be not children in mind; yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men" (1 Cor. 14:20). And children are free from worldly ambition. This is the point Jesus was emphasizing, for that was the lesson the apostles heeded at that time. To be great in the kingdom of God one must be humble and unselfish—free from worldly ambition. When brethren engage in a mad scramble for places of honor and gain, it shows how far they have missed the ideal set forth by Christ; such have not the spirit of Christ and are none of His.

Since we are to become as little children, it seems evident that the phrase "such little children" refers to true believers, to those who become as little children (compare with Mat. 18:5-6). To receive such a one in the name of Christ—that is, to receive such a one as a Christian should—is to receive both Christ and God. Yet, the average church member shows a decided preference for the man, even the preacher, who pretends to be important. It was so even in the days of the apostles (Jam. 2:1-4).

To find that Jesus knew of their disputing along the way about which was the greatest, and then to be rebuked for their worldly ambition, was bound to make the apostles feel uncomfortable. It seems that John thought to relieve the sit-

uation somewhat by diverting the attention of Jesus to someone else and getting Him to endorse what they had done. "Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us" (Mark 9:38). As the man was casting out demons in the name of Christ, they should have known that God was with him, and that they should have bidden him Godspeed. He was not of another religion; he could not have cast out demons in the name of Christ had not Christ given him authority to do so. But the man would not come along in the immediate company of the followers of Christ. John and the others could not boss him. And, again, they brought a rebuke upon themselves.

None but their parents would be so likely to bring these children to Jesus. Matthew says they brought these children to Jesus that He might lay His hands on them and pray. It is said that parents sometimes took their children to the head man of the synagogue that he might bless them. It was natural, therefore, for these parents to bring their children to Jesus for a like reason. "And the disciples rebuked them" (10:13). The disciples evidently meant well; but, as someone has said, a person may mean well and do ill. The closer you are to the Lord, the more harm you may do by your well-meant, but ill-chosen, words. It seems that the disciples, for some reason, thought that

bringing the children to Jesus was a needless interference with what they considered weightier matters. How little they knew of the Master's mind! Yet, when Jesus saw their interference, He was moved with indignation. The disciples were entirely too officious. Children in the home and the love and care of parents for their children meant much to Jesus, and it angered Him for His own disciples to rudely drive parents and children from Him.

When people try to find support in this incident for the sprinkling of children, they are certainly hard pressed. Nothing is said about *baptizing* the children. It is singular that these advocates of infant sprinkling hunt so persistently for Scriptures to prove that infants should be *baptized*, and then as persistently hunt for Scriptures to prove that it is not necessary for adults to be baptized! Had the sprinkling of children been the practice of Jesus and His disciples, the disciples would not have rebuked these parents for bringing their children. On the contrary, they would have praised these parents for bringing their children and would have exhorted others to do likewise. To the disciples Jesus said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God" (10:14). That is, suffer them to come to Me for the purpose named—namely, that He should lay His hands on them and pray. The

kingdom of God must be received in a childlike, trusting spirit, without the taint of worldly pride and ambition. And then Jesus did what the parents had in view in bringing the children to Him. “And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them” (10:16). And what a blessing children are in homes where parents are real fathers and mothers to them!

Jesus was on His last journey to Jerusalem. Though Jesus had just told them plainly of His coming trials and death, it seems to have made no impression on the disciples—at least, not on James and John. They still had in mind that Jesus would soon establish a kingdom like their kingdom of old, and they were determined to get in their bid for the highest places of honor in that kingdom. Through their mother, Salome, they made their bid. Compare Mark 10:35

with Matthew 20:20-21. Jesus told them that their request came of ignorance. “And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John” (Mark 10:41). They felt that James and John were seeking an undue advantage of them.

Then Jesus called them to Him and made to them the speech recorded in Mark 10:42-45. Ambitious James and John and the indignant ten needed to be sobered down. Jesus, in effect, told James and John that, in seeking the highest places, they were manifesting the spirit of their hated Gentile rulers—they wanted the highest places of authority, so as to lord it over the others. To be told that they were manifesting the spirit of their hated Gentile rulers was a severe rebuke, and should have had a sobering effect on them, and the rebuke should have given some satisfaction to the indignant ten.

“But it is not so among you” (10:43). There would be no such places of authority among the disciples of Christ as James and John asked for. None would lord it over another—none would exercise authority over others. Greatness would be determined by service. To be first of all—greatest of all—one must be servant of all. “For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (10:45). Jesus served both the physical and the spiritual needs of humanity. Humanity’s greatest need was deliverance from the bondage of sin. A ransom is a price paid for redeeming, either from slavery or from captivity. The sinner has been led captive by the devil and made to be a servant of sin. Jesus gave His life to redeem the sinner. He, therefore, is both redeemer and ransom.

Deceased

The Two Laws of Pardon

Gus Nichols

A great many people are confused concerning the two laws of pardon. They make no distinction between the conditions of pardon to the alien sinner and the terms upon which children of God, or members of the church, are forgiven. It cannot be successfully denied that there are two classes. Speaking to alien sinners, Jesus said: “Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). John speaks of “the children of God” and “the children of the devil” (1 John 3:10). All accountable persons who are not the children of God are the children of the

devil. Our loving Father offers pardon to each of these classes of persons. It is important to know that God does not pardon both classes on the same terms. They are not on the same basis before God, and He does not deal with them as if they both stood in the same relation to Him. In civil government, there is a distinction between an alien, or foreigner, and a citizen. An alien cannot qualify to vote on the same terms as a citizen. If a wife leaves her husband, she may be reconciled to him and become one with him without a second marriage ceremony (1 Cor. 7:11). But a maiden

must get married before she can live as a wife.

The Alien Sinner Needs Pardon

The alien sinner needs pardon from God. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Those who die in their sins, or without pardon, cannot go where Jesus is (John 8:21). No accountable person can detour around the new birth and enter the kingdom of God. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (3:5). No man can be so morally good that he does not need the new birth,

or that he does not need to be converted and saved. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 18:3).

Children of God Also Need Pardon

David was a child of God, and he sinned grievously (2 Sam. 12). He went so far as to commit adultery and murder (12:9, 13). The apostle Peter denied his Lord, lied, cursed, and swore, after having followed Jesus for more than three years, and was forgiven as an erring child (Mark 14:66-72). The best of God’s children need to be cleansed from sin along the heavenly way (1 John 1:7). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1:8). “*There is no man that sinneth not,*” (1 Kin. 8:46). “For *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*” (Ecc. 7:20). This being true, the children of God need to be forgiven when they sin, as did David, Peter, and others.

There Is a Law of Pardon

Many are being taught that there is no law of pardon—that God has no certain law by which to convert and save sinners. They think God saves in different ways, and upon no certain conditions. According to them, there is no certain rule or regulation about the matter, and the sinner must grope his way in darkness and superstition, not knowing at what point salvation may be had. They are taught to feel their way and “pray through to God.” The whole matter is left in confusion. However, there is a law of pardon, a certain way of salvation, and one

can know exactly the time and the place where it takes place, just as he can point out the time and the place where he became a husband or was married to his wife. While we are not saved by the “law of works,” or by a perfectly moral life, we are saved by “the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). To say one is converted and saved without any sort of law is to deny the Bible, which says: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Psa. 19:7). The idea that there is no law of pardon also contradicts Paul’s statement: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

The Law to Alien Sinners

Isaiah prophesied that the church would be established in the last days and said: “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). This *law* includes the terms of pardon which were to go forth from Jerusalem. Jesus said: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Pentecost is called “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). It was on that day that Peter began to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. When alien sinners believed in Jesus as Lord and Christ and asked what to do to be saved, Peter said unto them: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”

(2:38). This is “the law” and “the word of the Lord” which was to go forth from Jerusalem and to be preached among all nations. Those who obeyed the Gospel received the promise of the commission, which said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Such is the first law of pardon, the law to alien sinners.

The Law to Children of God

In the case of Simon the sorcerer, we find the second law of pardon, the law to erring children of God. Philip preached Christ unto the Samaritans; and “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). Simon the sorcerer did the same things the others did, and if they were saved, so was he. If their faith was genuine, so was his for the record says: “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (8:13). He had come to the promise that said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). He had done what Peter told alien sinners to do on Pentecost and thus had obeyed the first law of pardon, the law to alien sinners. However, this man Simon later sinned in trying to buy the power to confer the miraculous gift of the Spirit upon others. Time enough had elapsed between his baptism and his sin that Peter and John heard about the Word being received in Samaria, and came down there to confer this power

upon those converted (Acts 8:14-18). It is false to say he turned right around and sinned after his baptism, as some have said.

But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me (8:20-24).

Please note that Peter, the same preacher who told aliens on Pentecost to “repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins,” here told a church member, one who had already been baptized, to “repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God.” Why the different answers? Why tell some to repent and be baptized, and the others to repent and pray? Because there are two different laws of pardon—one to the alien which includes baptism, and the other to the child of God, which includes prayer instead of baptism. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for pardon (Luke 11:4). He also taught them that they would have to forgive others to be forgiven (Mat. 6:9-15). John teaches disciples to confess their sins (1 John 1:9). Hence, the second law of pardon is repentance, confession, and prayer.

Some Quibbles Refuted

1. It is argued by some that Simon did not have genuine faith. However, the Bible says he be-

lieved “also,” or the same as the others in the previous verse. He was not the only one who believed as he did; neither did the others believe properly if he did not. Simon believed “also.” His faith was like the faith of the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-13).

2. But others say Simon had never been truly converted or saved, else he would not have sinned later. One might as well argue that Peter was still a child of the devil when he denied the Lord (Mark 14:66-72). Children of God are sometimes so weak that they are soon removed from the right way after conversion (Gal. 1:6).

3. Others say Simon was not saved, or he would have received the Spirit along with the others and would not have had occasion to try to buy this gift. But he was not trying to buy the Spirit for himself, but rather the power to confer the Spirit upon others (Acts 8:19).

4. Still, others argue that supposing he was a child of God, he could not have perished, for they say only aliens can perish. But Peter denied this theory of “once in grace, always in grace.” He said: “Thy money perish with thee” (8:20). He was in danger of perishing.

5. Some say his heart never was right before God, but Peter used the present tense and said: “Thy heart is not right.” He did not say it never had been right.

6. It is further argued by some that he never had repented; hence, he was never saved. But he was not called upon to repent of all he ever did in his life that was wrong but to repent of “this thy wickedness” (8:22). *This* sin of trying to buy the power to confer

the Spirit on others was his only sin. He was not told to repent of all the wickedness he had ever done, as though he had never been converted. Furthermore, he was not told to pray that all the thoughts of his heart be forgiven, as though all his thoughts up to this time had been evil. But Peter said: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought [singular] of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (8:22). Only one “thought” of his heart needed to be forgiven, and that was the thought “that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (8:20).

7. I have heard others say that Peter said Simon was “yet” in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. But Peter did not say this. The word *yet* is not in the passage. Peter simply used the present tense and said: “Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity” (8:23).

8. All of the foregoing quibbles are made to prove Simon was an alien sinner to have an example of conversion in which an apostle told an unsaved man to pray for pardon without baptism. But remember, this man had already been baptized (8:13). It is a clear-cut case of the possibility of apostasy and the second law of pardon. It proves the fact that a child of God can so sin as to “perish,” and that if members of the church do not repent of their “wickedness” they will not be forgiven. It is a perversion of the truth to change the two laws of pardon and teach that baptism is for Christians and that aliens should pray for pardon.

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Bible Response to Christian Zionism

Gary W. Summers

The purpose of this article is not to advocate political policy—but rather to examine an idea that claims to be built upon Scripture. According to the internet:

Christian Zionism is a religious and political movement that supports the right of the Jewish people to a homeland in Israel based on biblical interpretations. A core belief is that the establishment of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy and is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

What is in error from the above statement? Israel does not have “a right” to a homeland. No verses in the Bible teach such a doctrine. No prophecies in either the Old or New Testaments foretell of a Return of Israel to the land in 1948, and it certainly is not a prerequisite to Jesus’ Second Coming. What does the Bible say about each one of these points?

The Promises to Abraham

In Genesis 12, God made three promises to Abraham. God told him to leave where he was living and travel to a country that God would show him (12:1). He promised to make of Abraham a great nation. Not only would he bless Abraham, but Abraham

would be a blessing to others, also (12:2). In fact, God would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him. In Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed (12:3). When Abraham got to the land that God showed him, the Lord promised it to him and his descendants (12:7).

So, God made three promises to Abraham.

1. The land promise (12:1, 7)
2. The nation promise (12:2)
3. The spiritual promise (12:3).

God repeated the nation promise after Abraham showed himself willing to offer up Isaac (22:17). God also elaborated on the spiritual promise, saying, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (22:18). That Seed was Christ (Gal. 3:16), through whom everyone in the whole world is blessed.

In another passage, Abraham was promised that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16). God also promised Abraham that, from where he was standing, he would possess the land for as far as he could see in all

four directions (13:14). All three of these promises were repeated to Isaac (26:2-4) and to Jacob (28:13-15).

Christian Zionists often refer to passages like these, but they seldom point out that all three of these promises have been fulfilled. It should be obvious to all who call themselves Christians that the spiritual promise has been fulfilled. Jesus has died on the cross for the sins of all mankind (1 John 2:2). The nation promise has also been fulfilled. In Numbers 1, the text counts 603,550 men from twenty years old and upward, who left Egypt (1:3, 46). What about the nation promise? The following verses should answer that question once and for all.

So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which he had sworn to give to their father, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass (Jos. 21:43-45).

Continued on Page 3



Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

The next tribe mentioned is the tribe of Ephraim. It says regarding them: "And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers" (1 Chr. 12:30). The quality of being "mighty men of valour" was previously stated regarding the men from the tribe of Simeon, "Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred" (12:25). Since we have previously discussed this quality (see August 2025 issue of *Defender*), we will not reiterate the points we made concerning it.

There is another quality given the men of the tribe of Ephraim which is they were "famous throughout the house of their fathers." There is a marginal note showing the Hebrew is "men of names." These soldiers used their influence for good and for the side of right. They recognized they had an influence on others. There should be a recognition that every person has influence upon others. Paul put it this way, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Rom 14:7). While Paul, in context, is dealing with the fact we belong to God and whether we live or die we are His, there is still the implication within the con-

text of the chapter that we do influence others by our actions. There are multiple illustrations of individuals who were either good examples or bad examples always depending on their actions. These men from the tribe of Ephraim used the influence they possessed for good and the side of right.

The Lord's army need soldiers like the men of Ephraim who realize they are an example to others and set the right example. Paul informed his son in the faith, Timothy, to use his influence for good and right: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). While Timothy might not have thought he had an influence and there might have been those who despised or looked down on him because of his age, Paul still encourages him to use his example for Christianity. Paul tells him repeatedly to fight the battles, wage a good warfare, but in the midst of doing so, be an example of believers. Age did not matter, actions do. Thus, whether young or old, use the influence you have for God and right.

Again, Paul tells the young preacher, Titus, to speak sound doctrine. He then instructs what older men are to be and taught, then older women, next younger women, and last younger men. He then instructs Titus that he is to show himself to be a type or pattern of good works, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Tit. 2:7-8). Ti-

tus was not only to teach them sound doctrine or speech, but he was also to live it as well. Nothing evil would be able to be said about him in either case, what he taught or how he lived. He was using his influence as a wonderful example for the brethren at Crete (and elsewhere).

Likewise, each one of us have influence over others even as Timothy and Titus possessed. Paul recognized this regarding both himself and the Corinthians when he wrote, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2). According to the Oxyrhynchus papyri (a collection of ancient papyri from the second to seventh century discovered in northern Egypt), it was a common practice in the first century for teachers to carry with them letters of commendation to attest to their validity. Paul's opponents followed this practice, but Paul had reason to doubt the authenticity of those letters (4:2; cf. 2 The. 2:2). It is possible that Paul's opponents did not actually possess any letters. So, Paul makes the point that unlike these pseudo letters which were not available to public scrutiny, his letter was the Corinthians themselves. The changed lives (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11) of the Corinthians would be able to be known and read by anyone and everyone. Their

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

lives were a testament to Christian living. Everyone would be able to see their changed life as the Corinthians were being examples to the world of Christianity (along with the truthfulness of Paul's message).

After giving the beatitudes as recorded in Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus then says:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (5:12-14).

Christians are to make a great impact on the world. Jesus uses the figure of disciples being salt and light. While salt has many uses, some of them are that it is a flavoring agent, it preserves from corruption, and freshens and sweetens that to which it is applied. Thus, salt influences anything to which it

is applied. Likewise, the Christian is to influence the world around us. A good illustration of this influence is seen during Paul's journey to Rome recorded in Acts 27-28. As they were travelling, a storm arose on the Mediterranean called Euroclydon (27:14). This storm was so severe, "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (27:20). However, Paul informs them an angel from God telling him "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (27:24). Because of Paul's influence for good, all 276 people on board were saved.

"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5), Jesus said. This title belongs distinctively to Him (consider John the Immerser was not that light, 1:8). We are light of the world only as we shine with His light upon the world. Jesus points out that no one lights a candle (or lamp) only to cover it up but we are to live in such a way that we give light to all those in darkness. Thus, we are encouraged to "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). The faithful soldier of Christ will be living so as to be salt and light to the world that is engulfed in darkness.

When Christian soldiers are being the influence God expects us to be, then God takes notice. Solomon would state, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pro. 14:34). The entire nation feels the benefits of God's army their righteousness which corresponds to what he had previously stated, "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked" (11:11). God would have spared the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for ten righteous souls (Gen. 18:23-33). What an influence ten righteous would have had. Yet, there were not ten righteous in those cities resulting in God raining down fire and brimstone destroying the cities (19:24-25). Given the growing decadence in our society, many have wondered how many righteous people remain for whom God is sparing the United States. Those numbers are continuing to decline and wickedness increase. Let us be like the soldiers of Ephraim and use our influence for good and right.

MH

Continued from Page 1

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed (23:14).

Solomon pleaded for God to forgive Israel, when they were taken captive and repented of their sins, and bring them back into the land "which You have given to

Your people as an inheritance" (1 Kin. 8:34-36). This was fulfilled after the Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C.

A.D. 70

Many prophets in the Old Testament predicted the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the return decades later. But here is the problem that Zionists have: Although the destruction of Jerusalem was prophesied of, which would occur in A.D. 70,

there are no Scriptures that say that Israel will return to the land in 1948. Neither is there any promise that the temple would be rebuilt, and it has not. Jesus said of the temple buildings: "See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Mat. 23:38).

It had been God's house, but He had left the building. Now it belonged to Israel; their house was destroyed in A.D. 70. God's new house has already been built, which is the church built by Jesus (Mat. 16:18). Paul wrote to Timothy in-

structions that he might know how he “ought to conduct” himself “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Those instructions did not pertain to one’s actions inside the physical walls of a building. Christians are living stones in a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), the temple or church of Christ. Where are the Scriptures that promise the land and/or a literal temple upon it 1,878 years after A.D. 70?

Old Testament Prophecies

Are there prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of a return of Israel to the land or the rebuilding of the temple? Yes, but none of them speak of modern times; they refer to the return to the land in 536 B.C.—not A.D. 1948. Isaiah, for example, wrote between the years of 750 and 700 B.C. He mentions Israel returning to the land, but it would be under the direction of Cyrus, who is mentioned by name twice by Isaiah (Isa. 44:28 and 45:1). In 536 B.C., Cyrus gave the decree for Israel to return to their land and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-2).

Jeremiah and other prophets also foretold the return of Israel to their land, which is described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. None of these, however, allude to anything occurring in 1948. Neither the Old nor the New Testaments prophesy of this time period. The Israelites returned to their land in 536 B.C. and began rebuilding the temple the following year, but the project stalled until 520 B.C. when it was resumed and then completed in 516 B.C. Herod the Great added to it, that work

was completed just prior to the ministry of Jesus.

Right Before Our Eyes

Wars, battles, and various occurrences have been occurring in the “Holy Land” since the re-establishment of Israel by outside interests. What is meant by this statement? The first question to consider is: “How did Israel regain control of the land promised to Abraham (which had already been fulfilled millennia ago)? According to Google’s AI information:

The modern nation of Israel was established on May 14, 1948, with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv. This event followed the termination of the British Mandate for Palestine and occurred in accordance with the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, which was adopted in 1947. The declaration established Israel as a Jewish state and was immediately followed by a war with neighboring Arab states, which resulted in a Jewish victory and a significant displacement of Palestinian Arabs.

Israel as a nation did not fight to win back this territory with a military leader like Joshua or David. No, the United Nations made this decision on November 29, 1947, and there have been conflicts ever since. The Six-Days War in June of 1967 demonstrated that Israel was more than prepared to defend itself. They suffered about 1,000 casualties while their enemies lost 15,000. Israel also destroyed nearly all of Egypt’s military aerial assets, which gave Israel air supremacy. Much more has occurred in the decades since.

The point, however, is that every time a skirmish erupts headlines scream something like: “The pages of the Bible are literally coming

true right before our eyes.” There will, of course, be books to buy, explaining the Bible prophecies of these days and perhaps also promising to describe what will happen next. Balderdash!

Double balderdash! All of the passages from the Old Testament concerning Israel’s restoration to the land have already been fulfilled. None of them describes what is currently happening in the Middle East—or what has happened during the last 75 years.

Premillennialism

According to Google, Christianity “leads some Christians to support the modern state of Israel as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a sign of the end times.” Not everyone who supports the United States being an ally of Israel is a “Christian Zionist.” Many support Israel because it lies in a strategic location and because they allow their people to believe what they want—even to become Christians. Find a predominantly Muslim country that will do that. Many Americans, considering our history, cannot help but be on the side of liberty while opposing oppression and fanaticism.

So, one can be pro-Israel without being a Christian Zionist. Christians do not believe in premillennialism as most *Christian* denominations do. The theory is that there are Biblical prophecies of the end times, which is the first problem. Jesus taught that there were signs leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem—but none for the end of the world. (Notice all the signs for the former in Matthew 24:1-35, but for the latter, Jesus says, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the

angels of heaven, but My Father only”—24:36.)

A second problem that premillennialists have is they think that, after these *signs* are fulfilled, Jesus will rule in Jerusalem for a thousand years. How this doctrine continues to be so popular is an amazing thing since it had been pointed out for decades what Jesus said on the subject:

“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

Is there something vague or ambiguous in those words? What part of **not** is unclear and causes someone to say, “Jesus is coming back to establish a physical kingdom”? One would think that 2 Thessalonians taught that Jesus is coming from heaven with His mighty angels to establish a physical kingdom in Jerusalem—instead of “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 1:7-8). The next verse describes the punishment (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

First Thessalonians 4 talks about Jesus returning to the earth. He does not descend to Jerusalem to rule 1,000 years, however; His followers (first, those who have died, and second those yet living) rise up to meet Him in the air. “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 The. 4:13-17). Jesus has already received His kingdom, and it is a spiritual one—as promised (Mat. 4:17). Anyone may enter it by repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 22:16).

Winter Park, FL

What Is Replacement Theology?

Kent Bailey

Battles do not remain fought, and former victories do not remain won. *Replacement Theology* refers to religious terminology adapted by Premillennialism in opposition to those who correctly oppose this eschatological system of fatal error. When considering *Premillennialism*, it falls into four categories:

- Historic Premillennialism (Post-Tribulational)
- Dispensational Premillennialism (Pre-Tribulational)
- Ultra-Dispensational Premillennialism
- Hyper-Ultra-Dispensational Premillennialism

While the totality of Premillennialism advocates a fatal error, the Ultra-Dispensational position goes further from the truth than the “Historic” model, and the Hyper-Ultra-Dispensational is the most radical of all. It has been aptly described as Premillennialism gone to seed. The advocates of Premil-

lennialism in all its forms have various components in common:

Old Testament prophets did not prophesy regarding the church.

The church abides in what they refer to as the parenthesis.

The Old Testament prophets did not teach the period of the church.

Christ and the apostles taught that salvation would be in the time frame of the church, not the kingdom.

That there would be a national restoration of physical Israel, along with the fulfillment of God’s land promises to physical Israel.

Dispensational, Ultra-Dispensational, and Hyper-Ultra-Dispensationalism all teach that the Mosaic Law will be reestablished.

Dispensational, Ultra-Dispensational, and Hyper-Ultra-Dispensationalism teach that the Old Testament Temple will be rebuilt and that animal sacrifices will be reintroduced.

That fleshly Jewish people are God’s chosen people today.

All forms of Premillennialism advocate the establishment of a political kingdom at the Lord’s final coming.

That at His final coming, Christ will reign as King over this kingdom for a literal 1,000 years.

The Aspect of Replacement Theology. Premillennialists maintain that physical Israel continues to be the chosen people of God, that the land promise was never fulfilled as set forth in Genesis 15:8-21 and 17:7-8, that this promise is an everlasting possession, and that such guarantees both an everlasting continuance of the seed as a nation and its everlasting continuance of the land.

This is the point at which Premillennialism introduces the term **Replacement Theology**. Some use the phrases “**Fulfillment Theology**” or “**Supersessionism**.”

They correctly conclude that if New Testament Christians (individually) and the church of Christ (collectively) constitute God's chosen people, physical Israel is no longer (collectively), and the Jewish people are no longer individually the chosen people of God. Such being the case, they no longer have a real estate title to the land in Palestine. Premillennialism rejects God's truth on this matter.

Consider the definition of *Everlasting*. The definition of this term in the Hebrew language has several meanings. Such can mean age-lasting, eternal, or perpetual. Such does not always mean eternal. This principle of the anointing of Aaron and his sons to "an everlasting priesthood" (Exo. 40:15).

In correctly understanding that the Priesthood has changed and has been replaced with the Priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:1-17), God never intended the Levitical priesthood to be everlasting. Such was to be limited to that of the Mosaic covenant.

Every New Testament Christian is a priest in the new priesthood of Christ (1 Pet. 2:5-9). No one can now serve as a priest of Christ and at the same time serve under the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 13:10). A change of the Levitical priesthood to the priesthood of Christ necessitated a change from the Old Testament to that of the New Testament (Heb. 7:12). Such being the case, those who are Jewish—part of physical Israel cannot be—in the New Testament age the chosen people of God.

Consider that Old Testament circumcision was an everlasting covenant, as stated in Genesis 17:9-14. The covenant of physical circumcision of the flesh was said

to last as long as Abraham's seed was to possess the land. Thus, circumcision was to be on that condition of everlasting. Such was conditional. For Israel to maintain the land, they had to obey the everlasting covenant of physical circumcision. Even all the Gentiles who dwelt in the land with the Jews were required to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12-13). However, the New Testament clearly indicates that God never intended that physical circumcision be continued endlessly as a religious action (Acts 15:1-29).

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to state that those who practiced physical circumcision as a religious requirement make Christ unnecessary for salvation and are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:1-4).

Premillennialism denies that Old Testament Israel received the Land promise; the Scriptures affirm that this promise was granted and that Israel did possess the land.

- Joshua 21:43
- Joshua 23:15-16
- Joshua 24:8
- 2 Chronicles 20:7-8
- Jeremiah 32:21-23

Consider that the land promise was the land of Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's sojourn (Genesis 17:8, 26:2-3, 28:4). The land where they sojourned was promised for an everlasting possession. We have already established that *everlasting* does not always mean eternal. Such can also mean **age-lasting**, applying exclusively to the Mosaic covenant. This covenant was terminated at the cross (Col. 2:13-14). It was **superseded** or **replaced** by the New Testament of Christ; therefore, those of Judaism are no longer the chosen people of

God. Furthermore, this promise only applied to faithful Jewish people under the Mosaic law. This law, as already proven, had been abrogated—nailed to the cross of Christ. At the final coming of Christ, this land, along with the remainder of creation, will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:10). The Land promise was given to Israel for possession during time on earth. Such is not unconditional, as it required faithfulness unto God and did not extend into eternity.

Premillennialism falsely affirms that there will be a reconstitution and restatement of the Mosaic Covenant, including the Levitical priesthood and Old Testament animal sacrifices. The fatally false view that **all** Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted literally indeed presents serious problems for this system. Notice Isaiah 56:7, 66:20-23, Jeremiah 33:18, Ezekiel 43:18-46:24, and Zechariah 14:16-21. Their false reasoning is that such prophecy must be interpreted only literally and therefore could not have been fulfilled in the historic past. They falsely conclude that they must be fulfilled in some imaginary earthly millennial kingdom. **Jeremiah 33:18 places Premillennialism in a hopeless dilemma.** In Galatians 2:16-19, Paul correctly argues that reintroducing the Mosaic Law would make Christ the minister or servant of sin. This principle of truth demonstrates that Premillennialism is totally irreconcilable with God's scheme of Redemption.

Consider that there cannot be a reinstatement of the Levitical priesthood following the priesthood of Christ without rejecting God's scheme of Redemption.

Since the priesthood of Christ is unchangeable according to Hebrews 7:12-24, this necessitates that the reinstatement of the Levitical priesthood or even a different priesthood than that of Christ is absolutely impossible and a rejection of the Divine plan of God. God, therefore, never did intend for the prophecy of **Jeremiah 33:18** to be fulfilled in a literal physical way. This amounts to a truly devastating blow against the Premillennial program, yet advocates of this false doctrine call for the Old Testament prophets of the Levites to be fulfilled in some future Millennial kingdom. Again, Premillennialism rejects the inspired teaching of Hebrews 10 regarding the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Consider that remission of sins is obtained by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Because such is the case, God will never again receive another offering on behalf of sin (Heb. 10:12-18). In consideration of these Scriptures, how can any-

one even suggest, let alone mandate, animal sacrifices being reinstated? Ezekiel 43:18-46:24 clearly indicates that the offerings of the Levites were those of sin offerings. Those of the Premillennial heresy attempt to extricate themselves from this problem by stating that during the earthly millennium, animal sacrifices will not be **expiatory**. However, a careful examination of Ezekiel 43:18-46 indicates that these sacrifices were indeed expiatory. Therefore, such could not be offered following the complete and perfect Sacrifice of Christ.

Please note that all these Millennial meanderings are contingent upon Jewish people individually and physical Israel collectively continuing to be the chosen people of God. These people continually speak of the importance of a Jewish return and restoration to the Land promise of God. Note the comparison of the words **return** and **restore**. However, a return is not a

restoration. If modern-day Israel is to be considered the chosen people of God, then their nation must be reconstituted, and the Old Testament government reorganized. It means the entire Mosaic covenant and system must be reestablished. There can be no restoration of Israel without the rebuilding of the temple, the reinstatement of the Old Testament ordinances, and the reviving of the ceremonies that Christ nailed to the cross. None of this is going to take place. The temple is not a physical construction. Such is a spiritual construction that is found in the fellowship of Christ (Acts 15:13-17; 1 Pet. 2:5). As a matter of fact, the Old Testament aspect of being chosen of God has been **replaced** in the blood-bought New Testament church of Christ.

Premillennialism dethrones Christ; it is exposed as being untrue and is without the hope provided for all individuals, whether Jew or Gentile (Eph. 3:21).

Calhoun, GA

Pernicious Dispensational Premillennialism

As is emphasized in this issue is the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants as recorded by Moses in Genesis 12:1-3. God gave these promises to him because of his faithful obedience (Heb. 11:8ff). However, God also warned the land would spue them out if they were not faithful (Lev. 18:28; 20:22). God also warned the Israelites they would no longer be His people when Hosea had his third child, God said, "Call his name Loammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*" (Hos. 1:9).

Through Israel's history, they turned away from God and turned to immorality and ungodliness. God sent them prophets to warn of their doom, but they paid no attention to them and persecuted them. This prompted Stephen to ask the Sanhedrin, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have

slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One" (Acts 7:52). They had no answer except to murder him. They were proving their history to be correct.

Jesus taught the Israelites rejected the stone that was the head of the corner (Mat. 21:42) quoting from Psalm 118:22-23. This was after Jesus had given the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mat. 21:33-40). The husbandmen in the parable rejected and slew all those the lord (owner) of the vineyard sent. Jesus summarizes with the question, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" (12:40). The response was the lord would destroy the husbandmen and give it to others. Jesus states in response, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation

bringing forth the fruits thereof" (12:43). The *you* is plural dealing with the Israelites nation.

As Jesus looked over Jerusalem, He expresses His desire to save and protect them, but then adds, "and ye would not!" (23:37). Thus, Jesus says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (23:38). The Israelites showed this when they stood outside Pilate's hall and cried out, "Crucify *him*, crucify *him*" (Luke 23:21). They were no longer God's people. They rejected the Son, thus God took the kingdom from them and gave it to a nation bringing forth fruit for God. That nation is the church, and it is the only Israel of God today. God made sure no one would be able to trace their lineage back to Abraham by destroying all the genealogical records at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Do not be deceived by the pernicious doctrine.

DEFENDER

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