



Boy Dies At Faith Healing Service

John Isaac Edwards

An healing service became a consoling service as an eight-year-old autistic boy died at the Faith Temple church in north Milwaukee Friday, August 22, 2003. According to David Hemphill, the “pastor” of the church, “The adults formed a circle around the boy and placed their hands lightly over him as they prayed for him. We were just praying for him and asking God to deliver him from the spirit that he had. The little boy had spirits in him, and we were asking God to deliver him.” Mr. Hemphill said the prayers were in accordance with Matthew 12:43, which says, “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.” At the end of the prayers, one of the women noticed the boy was not breathing. One of the adults called 911, but when emergency services arrived around 11 p.m., the boy was dead. “We just consoled one another today,” said the “pastor.”

Of all the places you might think of

one dying, the least expected would have to be an “healing” service. This incident is unfortunate, but it makes some things stand out.

1. Misuse of Matthew 12. Matthew 12:43 does not identify the nature of the “unclean spirit” nor does it tell how, or by what means, “the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.” The context shows the “unclean spirit” is the spirit of wickedness, and that “it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to

turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (Matt. 12:43-45; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). It is a misuse of Matthew 12:43 to teach miraculous spirit expulsion or devil casting today.

2. Supernatural Signs Do Not Continue Today. If you claim power to “cast see “Boy Dies” on p. 633

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The Vanity of Life

Mike Willis

In the opening verses of Ecclesiastes, Solomon utters his despondent words, “Vanity of vanity; all is vanity” (1:2). This is followed by instances that confirm the conclusion he expressed. Who among us has not experienced some of these same feelings of vanity?

The endless cycle of the generations. One generation comes and another one goes (1:4). Furthermore, there is no remembrance of those who have gone before, nor will there be remembrance of us. “There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after” (Eccl. 1:11).

Sometimes one begins thinking too highly of his own importance. He thinks he is indispensable at the office or in the local church. Nevertheless, at his passing, the work continues. Even if he is the only employee in a small shop, those who use the things he supplies find someone else to supply their needs and the business cycle continues. In the church, someone steps forward to take the place of the one who passed and the Lord’s church continues.

The thought that no one will remember us may cause one to think, “What difference does it make?” “What’s the use of sacrificing to accomplish this or that task? No one will care or remember what was done.” Most of mankind’s labors are occupied in the trivialities of providing a living. Few instances in human history are remembered and these usually for a few short decades or generations. Most of the events of human history pass into oblivion within a few short years. Visit a country graveyard and try to decipher the names on the granite stones which have eroded through the passing years. Those names that you cannot make out were someone’s father, mother, brother, or sister. Their memory has passed. Those who swore at their passing, “Your memory will live forever” have lived so long that they have lost their own memory or are dead. The memory of those before us passes away.

So passes the cycle of generations for those of us who are living. Soon we will die and be forgotten by those who come after us.

The endless natural cycles. Solomon also was wearied with the cycles of nature. He observed,

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New Testament Evangelism

Connie W. Adams

The church is the body of the saved. But what are the saved supposed to do? They ought to worship God. They ought to live godly lives before the world. They ought to teach the gospel to the world, which brings us to the subject of this article — telling the good news to dying humanity. Paul said the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Local churches are lamp stands, hence, bearers of light (Rev.1:20).

The Early Church in Evangelism

The book of Acts tells the thrilling account of how the apostles became witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). In Jerusalem “they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them *about three thousand souls* (2:41). A short time later it was said, “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was *about five thousand*” (4:4). They did not decide the church was too big but pressed on in their teaching. “And the word of God increased; and the *number* of the disciples *multiplied* in Jerusalem *greatly*, and a *great company* of the priests were obedient to the faith” (6:7).

The persecution which scattered many from Jerusalem only resulted in greater evangelistic effort as they “went everywhere preaching the word” (8:4). The city of Samaria was next (8:12) and then many villages of the Samaritans heard the gospel (8:25). Later it was stated, “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were *multiplied*” (9:31). Even years after the scattering persecution, the church at Jerusalem was still large and thriving and referred to as “the multitude.” “Then all the *multitude* kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul” (15:12).

Beyond Palestine proper, the work flourished. Luke wrote of the efforts in Asia Minor “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increasing in number daily” (16:5). At Thessalonica in Greece “some of them (Jews) believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks *a great multitude*, and of the chief women *not a few*” (17:4). At Corinth “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and *many* of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” for God had “*much people*” in that city where Paul continued for a year and six months,

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“teaching the word of God among them” (18:8-11). At Ephesus there were *many* who believed and “so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (19:18-20).

From these accounts it is evident that the early disciples took the Great Commission seriously. They had a compelling sense of urgency in this work. While they were busy teaching and converting the lost, they also made provision for the functioning of local churches in meeting their needs for spiritual growth and for providing for the needy among them. In Acts 6, special servants were appointed to see to the needs of Grecian widows while the apostles gave themselves to the ministry of the word. Paul and Barnabas “ordained elders in every church” they had established in Asia Minor (Acts 14:23). The church at Jerusalem had elders (15:4, 6) as did the churches in Judea (11:29-30). But the lifeline of the church was evangelism.

Two Means of Evangelism

The Local Church. Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help the new work at Antioch (11:22-24) and this resulted in “*much people*” being added to the Lord. This church developed a great and successful teaching program (13:1). It was from this live and growing church that the gospel launched a major assault on the Roman Empire. Paul and Barnabas were sent forth with the blessings of these brethren who maintained a great interest in their work, for they came back and “rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles”! (14:27). The new congregation at Thessalonica, with growing pains and many trials to overcome, had caught that spark of urgency which motivated Paul and Silas, so that within a year from their beginning Paul wrote them and said “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not speak anything” (1 Thess. 1:8). Churches in Macedonia supplied wages to Paul to sustain his work at Corinth, even though all those churches were composed of new converts (2 Cor. 11:8). The Philippian church sent “once and again” to support Paul in his preaching at Thessalonica (Phil. 1:5; 4:15-16). It is not hard to see where these congregations placed the emphasis. They were not in the business of hoarding money. They did not argue “the heathen are at home.” They needed places to meet, worship, and edify each other. But they knew, above all else, what their primary work was.

The Individual. Scattered disciples did not wait for an eldership with an organized program to assign them visitation cards. They found lost people on their own and taught them the gospel (Acts 8:3-4). They were self-starters. Philip did not wait for some church to “call him to the work.” He went to Samaria, preached the gospel and *started* the work. Then he taught the Ethiopian treasurer and sent the gospel into that country by means of that devout man. Then he was found at Azotus and preached all the way up the coast

to Caesarea. Peter challenged every Christian to “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). Every Christian is to give diligence so as not to be a workman who is ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15), and is to learn how to “teach faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

So, let each congregation do all it can to spread the word at home and abroad, and let each individual rise to his potential and seize every opportunity to teach the word to the lost. This is our task.

Motives to Prompt Us

There are ample reasons why both congregations and individuals should be engaged in evangelism. “For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). The gospel is the universal remedy for the universal malady of sin (Rom. 1:16).

Paul said “for I am debtor” (Rom. 1:14-15) and said he was ready to meet that obligation “as much as in me is.” He wrote, “For woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). In 2 Corinthians 5:10-14, he gave three compelling motives which should move us all to greater effort in saving the lost: (1) the judgment to come (v. 10); (2) the terror of the Lord (v. 11); and (3) the love of Christ which ought to constrain us. The knowledge that all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ and that those who are unprepared shall receive everlasting punishment (2 Thess. 1:7-10) should so overwhelm us that we cannot rest. The thought that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (John. 3:16) should fill us with awe, and lead us to overcome every excuse and rise to the occasion.

Prior Assumptions

All who teach the gospel approach the work with certain presuppositions. First, people *need* what we have to offer. They may not know that, but we do. Second, people can understand the gospel. Third, we work *in hope*. Optimism must characterize us. Fourth, we should expect to see people obey the truth once they understand it. Fifth, we must understand that our efforts are *not in vain*. We look for “visible results.” Instead, let us prepare the ground, sow the seed and water it, and then leave the rest to the Lord who gives the increase. Sixth, we must work with the genuine conviction that *the salvation of one soul is worth more than all the world* (Matt. 16:26).

It is time to stop worrying about congregations getting “too big” (many are actually shrinking), and get on with the work of the gospel. Some have become so obsessed with real estate and providing places of honor for the ambitious who are determined to lead, whether qualified or not, that sight has been lost as to what the saved are supposed to do. “Speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) will cause the church to edify itself. It will also result in saving the lost

“Do Not Your Righteousness Before Men”

Jim C. McDonald

Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 6:1).

Jesus warned that “our righteousness is not to be done before men to be seen of them” and then gave three illustrations of that righteousness: alms deeds, prayer, and fasting. These will all be noticed in future articles, but for now consider these words “your” righteousness. In this passage “your righteousness” has references to the deeds we do; the way we live our lives. Jesus warned our “righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees else we will not attain unto the kingdom of God” (Matt. 5:20). Jesus charged that these men “say and do not” (Matt. 23:1). God instructs us in the things we must do to please him and, if we please him, we will do those things.

“Righteous” and “righteousness” are used in a variety of ways in the Scriptures. Righteous describes the character of God. Abraham asked, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). Righteousness describes the nature of God’s commandments. “Let my tongue sing of thy words for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Ps. 119:172). Righteousness describes the good deeds which men do in obedience to God’s instructions. “We are saved, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Tit.

and that is our chief business. We can rest when we get to Heaven. When we attend to this work with diligence, there will be less time to advocate or defend unsound doctrines and schemes and less time to fuss.

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3:5). Righteousness also describes man’s justification. It is in the gospel where righteousness is found: “for therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith” (Rom. 1:17).

No man lifts himself “by his own boot straps.” He cannot save himself. Jews “sought to establish their own righteousness and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:4). True righteousness does not come to man through his perfect obedience to law (none keep law perfectly) “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 2:10-13). True justification (righteousness) comes by God’s grace, God’s gift to sinful man. “Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God through him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Yet, while man cannot save himself by his righteous deeds, he must obey God to be saved (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:7f).

It is this Jesus had in mind when he commanded: “Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them.” The passage implies that rather than man doing righteousness before men to be seen of them, he must do righteousness before God to be seen of him! It is wrong to seek the glory and praise of men; it is right to seek the glory and praise of God! Jesus did always the things which pleased his Father and so must we. Reward (praise) from man is short lived. The reward of pleasing God is eternal.

“The Orphan Homes Issue”

1947 Until Now

Bill Cavender

My previous article, No. 20, under the above title, was written in June and appeared in *Truth Magazine*, August 7, 2003. Now it is August 19. June was a time of preparation for moving back to our home in Murfreesboro, Tennessee from Tompkinsville, Kentucky. We moved on July 1; took two short trips away from home; spent the remainder of July and part of August in settling back into our house, finding places for all our “stuff,” giving some furniture and books to married grandchildren, looking into accumulated files, papers, records, and correspondence, with a view to discarding and destroying much of fifty-six years of being “a pack rat,” and working in our yard and flower beds. The third week of June began my fifty-seventh year of preaching and the fifty-sixth year of our marriage.

After three and one-half years of very pleasant work with the Lyons Chapel church in Tompkinsville, Kentucky (they were so good to us and thoughtful of us; an excellent, lovely group of brethren), it was time to return to our own house; to be nearer our second son, Philip, and his family; to our doctors; to our hospital, and to brethren in the Northfield Blvd. church, where we were members before moving to Tompkinsville in late December 1999. Our work with Lyons Chapel brought to a close our work with “local churches.” In fifty-six years of preaching, I worked as “a located preacher” with nine congregations (including Lyons Chapel), which encompassed forty-five years. Eleven years, 1978-80, and 1992-99, were spent in gospel meetings in the USA and Canada, twenty-two to twenty-five meetings each year, and not working regularly and “full-time” with any congregation. I am at present, preaching each Lord’s day for the Walton Chapel church in Lafayette, Tennessee, the only “conservative and non-institutional church” in Macon County. I hope to continue to preach by Sunday appointments and to hold a few meetings each year, with five such meetings being scheduled for this fall. I have ten meetings scheduled in 2004 and more in the years of 2005 and 2006, all if the Lord wills and health permits.

In my earlier years of preaching, several older preachers, including Dewey (C.D.) Plum of Parkersburg, West Virginia, advised Marinel and me to look to the future and plan ahead to our “elderly years,” if such God would give us. This is what he and sister Plum had done. We were advised to buy a house, if at all possible, in our working, earning years, and not to delay home ownership until we were old, unable to preach, work, and earn, and were living on savings (if any) and social security. We kept that advice in mind but did not own a house as soon as we should have. We bought a house in Texas (where we lived for twenty-nine years, four months) in 1978, then moved to Alabama in September 1980 and sold that house in 1981. In 1991 I was approaching my sixty-fifth birthday in November. Marinel and I determined that we would cease “local church work” at the end of that year, take our social security benefits, and just hold such gospel meetings as I was asked to conduct. In July of 1991, during two meetings in Nashville and Murfreesboro, we saw a house for sale which would meet our needs and was within our financial ability, so we purchased it. We moved to Murfreesboro in early December 1991, being no strangers to the city and Rutherford County. I began preaching by Sunday appointments in this county and adjoining Bedford County in the fall of 1947 when I came to Nashville as a student at David Lipscomb College. Through the years, 1948-1991, I held fifty-four gospel meetings in Murfreesboro and Rutherford County. Since our son, Philip (Phil), his wife, Melanie (Clifford), and their daughters, Katie (age 14) and Maggie (age 9) are permanent residents, and he has his business here, we believed this was a good place for us to live out our lives. So far as we can determine, to this present time, we could not have made a better decision.

I would advise young preachers to heed the advice that was tendered me years ago, i.e., if possible, own your home. This way you have the freedom to buy and sell, to make a profit or “lose your shirt”; to arrange and decorate

it as your wife wills, so the brethren can't object when you make holes in the walls by hanging pictures, to wreck it and make it a dump-heap or hog pen, or keep it in good repair, nice-appearing, and a real asset to your community, neighbors, and yourself; to keep animals, pets, in this house or in the yard, according to your desires. (I am of the "old school." We have never kept animals in our own house or in "the preacher's house." Marinel, and I grew up with parents who believed and practiced the principle that humans and animals did not live together under the same roof. Dogs were for the yard to keep robbers, intruders, and four-legged varmints away, the original "burgular alarm warning systems," and to eat the scraps and bones from the kitchen table. Cats were to live at the barn to catch and eat the mice and rats, to diminish in numbers that class of rodents in the animal kingdom, fulfilling the desires and purposes of feline taste buds which God created in cats for the enjoyment of such delicacies, and to receive a bowl of fresh, straight-from-the-cow milk each morning and evening when the cows were milked!) We lived in church owned houses, "the preacher's house," each time we worked with a church. There were a few advantages, especially in our early years in the forties and fifties, when we had little or no money, were supported very meagerly, our sons were being born and were growing up, and we could not have made a down-payment nor paid monthly payments on a house. Houses were supplied "as a part of your wages," wages which we never had access to nor any control over. We helped brethren in several places and churches to purchase and pay for a "preacher's house," the brethren paying us less in wages to pay for the house. We would move off and leave the house. We never had any degree of ownership or profit. Plan ahead if you can, young preacher, to purchase a future home while you are in your working, preaching, earning years, rent and/or lease it while you live in the church-owned "preacher's house." You will own a home in your old age. When you die, the brethren will need their house for the next preacher. If you have no home of your own, your wife will have to move out and go to live with the children or grandchildren. Plan ahead asking all the while that God's will be done!

The Orphans Home Issue

I became acquainted with "the Orphans Home Issue" in churches of Christ in 1946-47 (I obeyed the gospel in February 1946, having been reared in the Methodist Church) by reading the "gospel papers" published by the brethren, especially *The Gospel Advocate* in Nashville, *The Firm Foundation* in Austin, Texas, and *The Gospel Guardian* in Lufkin, Texas. The *Advocate's* position, at the first, was that all such "homes" (humanly-devised agencies, authorized by civil laws of the various states of the United States, and not found in other countries of the world unless Americans went there and established such "homes") had to be organized under "a board of directors" ("brethren scattered all over the country," as brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. characterized

the "boards" of those institutions). Such agencies, in the *Advocate's* terminology and nomenclature, were "restored homes" and the boards of directors, superintendents, and officials were *in loco parentis*, "in the place of the parents." Of course, the Holy Spirit-guided apostles of our Lord never spoke such words and theories, nor taught about such "aids and expedients" to New Testament churches and their work, nor set in the first century churches of our Lord any such boards, personages, and overseers of such agencies. The kingdom of God, planned and purposed in the mind and wisdom of the Almighty, and revealed in the New Testament by Jesus and his apostles, does not admit of and authorize the human agencies of men as a part of or attached to, the blood-bought local congregations of the Lord's redeemed children.

The *Firm Foundation* paper, at the first, took the position that the "homes" had to be under the oversight of the elders of a local congregation. Their premise was that caring for the widows and the orphans is the work of a local church, and that all work of a local church is to be under the oversight of the elders, and, therefore, the elders of a local church and not a "board of directors" of "brethren scattered all over the country," were the only scriptural arrangement for these agencies and institutions. In the early years of this controversy some writers of the *Advocate* and some of the *Firm Foundation* writers wrote and argued back and forth over which was the scriptural arrangement for these "homes," i.e., under a board of directors separate and apart from a local congregation, whether under the elders of a local church and a facet of a congregation's work. As controversy continued and the "anti-movement" gained attention, prominence, influence, both the *Advocate* and the *Firm Foundation* diminished and ceased discussing their fundamental difference and disagreement, and both turned their "big guns" (big preachers) on the "antis. This fundamental, basic disagreement among brethren and churches remains until this day and hour. They did not in the past, and they will not in the future, ever solve this problem among themselves, the reason being that Jesus and his apostles never said anything about their institutions and agencies, therefore nothing is said about how such were to be organized and administered. These brethren, then and now, try to bury their differences, sweep this fundamental problem under the rug of hypocrisy, and both groups continue to rail against "the terrible antis."

The *Gospel Guardian*, preceded by *The Bible Banner* under Foy E. Wallace, Jr. the editor, took the position that all such "homes" (orphan homes, children homes, unwed mothers homes, widows homes, etc.) were and are human in their origin; were and are authorized by civil, man-conceived statutes and not by the divine will of God; were and are overseen by "boards and conclaves" unknown to the New Testament; and could never be scripturally be "aids, adjuncts, auxiliaries, and expediences" to New Testa-

ment congregations of the Lord, as a facet of the scriptural work of such churches. It was argued by the editors and writers of the *Guardian* that all such human institutions must exist within the realm of the human, not the divine, regardless of the work which these agencies, institutions, and “homes” proposed to do, and should be supported, maintained, and subsidized by individuals, agencies, or businesses who and which may be interested in their existence and work, and not by local divine churches of our Lord. Each group, church, of God’s children has its own scripturally authorized work to do and must use “aids and expedients” to accomplish its work, under its elders, and by use of its monies in their treasuries. The “homes” and all human institutions have to use “aids and expedients” to accomplish their work, under the oversight of their boards of directors, superintendents, and other officials, and use such monies as are donated to them by interested persons or parties to accomplish their work, or by gains and returns from such investments as the “home” or institution may have. No human institution can ever scripturally be an “aid, adjunct, auxillary, or expedient” to a divinely authorized and scripturally directed church of Christ. A church has to use “aids and expedients” in accomplishing its work; human institutions, “homes” have to use “aids and expedients” in accomplishing their work. A church of Christ can never scripturally be “an aid and/or expedient” of a human institution, and a human institution can never scripturally be “an aid and/or expedient” of a congregation of saved, redeemed children of God, a church. No writer of the *Gospel Guardian* or any preacher labeled an “anti” ever believed and taught that these human institutions had no right to exist, but we did believe and teach (and still do) that these institutions cannot exist as church supported, church subsidized agencies. They are human in origin; churches of Christ are divine in origin.

Brother Paul Matthews taught church history at David Lipscomb College in Nashville, 1947-1950. He taught his students about the “Institutional Issues.” I was regularly reading the papers of the brethren while in Paul’s classes. Paul subscribed to and read the same papers. He agreed with the Bible and the *Gospel Guardian*. He taught us regarding the unscripturalness of the American Christian Missionary Society, begun in 1849, to which one hundred fifty-six churches sent delegates to form a human agency, a society, to “preach the gospel in all the world,” forming this human agency to do a work for all the local churches, instead of each church attending to and doing its own work according to its ability and resources. Paul taught us that all human agencies, societies, homes, or whatever they were called and whatever their organization and purposes, were not to be attached to the local divine churches of the Lord, as described in and circumscribed by the New Testament. In this church history class, Paul reinforced what I was reading in the *Guardian* and in the New Testament. Those were his convictions and views at that time. Later he

changed, preached for very liberal, institutional churches, and died that way in Shelbyville, Tennessee. Brother Ernest R. Harper of Herald of Truth, Highland Avenue Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, fame was Paul’s uncle. Paul came to endorse the Herald of Truth centralized, sponsoring-church type of church cooperation. We were close friends. He recommended me for the first two local works I did at Ashland City, Tennessee, and Cooper, Texas. But after his changes and endorsements of the errors among brethren which he had previously opposed and refuted, our friendship waned and we, were together no more after 1954. This still saddens me when I reflect upon those times and events, and the lost friendships and fellowships. Brethren who are not of the same mind, judgments, and convictions will soon go their separate ways (1 Cor. 1:10; 1 John 2:19; John 17:20-21).

The churches I first worked with and preached for in Rutherford, Bedford, Maury, and Cheatham counties in Tennessee, by Sunday appointments, in protracted meetings and in my first located work in Ashland City, Tennessee, 1947-1953, all supported Tennessee Orphans Home at Spring Hill, Tennessee. Most of the of the smaller, rural churches which I preached for would send ten dollars a month to “The Orphans Home,” although these churches had members and families who were prosperous farmers, land owners, and business people in some cases. The church at Ashland City, in 1949-1951, was a church of over two hundred people in attendance, with four elders and seven deacons, with some of the wealthiest, most prominent people in the city and county being members. They gave twenty-five dollars a month to “The Orphans Home.” Often, on the fifth Sunday of a month, some of these congregations would give the entire fifth Sunday contribution to “The Orphans Home.” Often, on the fifth Sunday of a month, a bus load of both boys and girls, would come from “The Orphans Home” and the little boys, some of them too young to be baptized believers, would conduct the Lord’s day morning worship services, leading the singing, leading the prayers, having charge and passing the bread and fruit of the vine to all assembled, pass the collection plates, and two or three of the older boys would preach. These services, with all of these young children present, and their sweet voices singing, were always very emotionally stirring to our spirits and always resulted in people giving more money to “The Orphans Homes.” Oftentimes a truck would come from “The Orphans Home” to the community and congregation. All the members had been previously notified to have all kinds of canned goods, house-keeping and toilet supplies, clothes, and useful items on hand, to be collected and given to “The Orphans Home” when the truck came by. This practice led some congregations to establish “a church pantry” with a supply of canned goods, cleaning supplies, etc. on hand all the time for a need in the church or community.

Seven Churches Of Asia Represent Modern Denominationalism?

Larry Ray Hafley

Dear Larry,

I have been speaking with a preacher at work. I gave him scriptures about the one church and he brought up Revelation chapter 1 about the seven churches of Asia. He was telling me that the seven churches represented the denominations, such as the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and so on. If you could shed some light on the subject there in Revelation, I would appreciate it. Exactly what did the seven churches and the seven candlesticks mean?

David

Dear David,

The seven churches meant the same thing as “the churches of Christ” in Romans 16:16; that is, different local congregations. There were “churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). Galatia was a province like West Virginia is a state, so it would be proper to refer to the “churches of West Virginia,” meaning the different churches in various places throughout the state.

Now, were these different denominations, as your friend alleges? No, for those churches were all established in one system of faith, *not* in many different doctrines and creeds as are the Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals.

1. Paul said he preached the same thing “every where

The Orphan Home officials knew how to “milk” the churches, how to touch the tender hearts of good people, how to work the brethren and churches and take their money, but never give any accounting of what and how much was collected, who were these children, where did they come from, what were their family situations, why were they inmates of and incarcerated in a mass child-rearing, institutional situation, and did the children really want to be where they were.

in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; cf. 4:6; 14:33). Paul could not have done that had he been going to a Baptist church, then to a Methodist church, then to a Catholic church. He could not have preached “once saved always saved” among the Pentecostals! He could have preached and practiced sprinkling for baptism among the Methodists and Catholics, but he could not have done so among the Baptists and Pentecostals! Thus, he could not have taught the same thing “every where in every church,” nor could he have said, “so ordain I in all the churches,” as he did in Corinth (1 Cor. 7:17), for none of the denominations would have allowed it. They all want to hold on to their particular doctrines. Hence, New Testament churches were not like unto denominational churches of our age.

2. In Acts 16:5, the Spirit said the churches were “established in the faith.” There is only “one faith” for which we must “earnestly contend” (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). The Bible never speaks of the “faiths,” plural, but of “the faith,” singular. Note it again: “So were the churches established in the faith.” Now, that could not be said of denominational churches today. Baptist churches are established in the Baptist system of faith. Methodist churches are established after the order of the Methodist Discipline. Lutheran churches are not of the same system of faith as

In those early years of my life as a Christian and as a preacher in all these circumstances and practices of brethren and churches, I was seeing, thinking, considering, meditating, and forming convictions in my own mind and soul. What I was reading in papers of the brethren, hearing in college classes in Bible and church history, and experiencing in the churches, were bringing me to certain firm conclusions and convictions about human institutions and “The Orphan Homes” among the brethren. (To be continued).

taught by the Pentecostals. What one does to become a Baptist will not make him a Lutheran. What one must do to become a Pentecostal will not make him a member of the Methodist church.

Therefore, those various denominations are all established in different systems of faith (Baptist faith, Methodist faith, Lutheran faith, etc.), but New Testament churches were “established in the faith.” The same is true of the seven churches of Asia.

3. If the seven churches of Asia represented seven diverse denominations, like unto the denominations of our day, why did Paul condemn such division (1 Cor. 1:10-13)? “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. . . . Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

David, if your friend is right, Revelation 1-3 approves that which Paul disapproved! Did the Holy Spirit direct Paul to forbid such denominational divisions and then use John to show his acceptance of them? God forbid! Ask your friend the question Paul asked the Corinthians, “Is Christ divided?” Some today are members of Lutheran churches. “Was Luther crucified for them?” “Were they baptized in the name of Luther?” If not, why be a Lutheran? The force of Paul’s argument is just as powerful and valid today as it was then. No man could defend denominational divisions then and no man can defend them today.

In Revelation 1:10-20, John saw one like the Son of man walking amidst seven golden candlesticks (v. 13). Of course, this was a picture of Jesus and the “seven candlesticks are seven churches” (v. 20). Each church was represented by a candlestick, as that which would send out light to those round about. Jesus told John to write what he saw to “the seven churches” of Asia (v. 11). In verse 11, those churches are identified as the ones to whom he wrote.

In Revelation 2:5, when he threatened to “remove thy candlestick,” that meant he would cease to recognize them as one of his churches if they did not repent. Compare 1:20 with 2:5. Remember that the book of Revelation is full of symbols and images. So, the seven candlesticks represented the seven churches. Jesus is pictured as walking among them (1:13), which shows his interest and familiarity with them. Thus, when he said, “I know thee and thy works,” he knew them, for he was among them in the representation given. The same is true of us today. He knows us. He knows his churches and “them that are his” (2 Tim. 2:19; cf. Ps. 139).

Observe that not a word is said about them being seven different denominations. Rather, they were all pictured as the same thing, “candlesticks.” Had they been different denominations, each with its own creed and doctrines, they could not have been featured as being the same, for they all would have been different — one a candlestick, one a head of cabbage, another a cucumber, a cantaloupe, etc. Let your friend prove his assertion that they were denominations like we have today. He cannot do it.

I know the seven churches were not Baptist churches, for they were threatened with the danger of apostasy and that some who were saved would be lost (Rev. 2:5, 16, 20-22; 3:4, 11, 16). Since Baptists say such a thing cannot happen to them, I know there were no Baptist churches in Revelation, chapters 1-3.

I know they were not Pentecostal churches, for nothing is said about Holy Spirit baptism and tongues, but one cannot go to a modern day Pentecostal church without those things being the focal point of their preaching and practice.

I know the churches of Asia were not Methodist or Lutheran churches, for we do not read of any pancake breakfasts, bake sales, or pie suppers in Revelation 1-3. Fairs and festivals are quite common among those denominations, but nothing is said about such things, so it is unlikely they were mentioned.

I know the churches of Asia were not like Methodist, Episcopal, or Presbyterian churches of today, for sexual immorality was sternly and strongly condemned (Rev. 2:20-22). However, those denominations today are having difficulty as to whether or not they ought to accept homosexual bishops. Hence, the churches in Asia were not akin to denominations among us.

I know the seven churches in Revelation were not Jehovah’s Witnesses, for their members were threatened with being cast alive into a lake burning with fire and brimstone, but Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in the existence of hell, so Revelation does not mention the Jehovah’s Witnesses (Rev. 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8).

I know the seven churches were not Catholic churches, for all the members were expected to be able to hear, remember the sins they had committed, repent, and obey the instructions given (Rev. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:18-20). This could not have included infants, for infants cannot “remember” and hear and repent, but Catholics baptize infants into the Catholic church.

I know none of the seven churches of Asia could have been Protestant churches such as we have today, for they fought against false “apostles” like the Pope and the Mormon apostles (Rev. 2:2; cf. 2 Cor. 11:13). Protestant

Joshua

Mark Mayberry

Joshua, a preeminent character of the Old Testament,

provides a worthy example for all who would come afterwards (Rom. 15:4). One beneficial way of studying his life is to think of him in the following roles:

As a Son

Joshua was the son of Nun. This identification occurs twenty-nine times in the OT. We know nothing about Joshua's father, except that his name means "posterity" or "perpetuity," and that he was from the tribe of Ephraim. Nevertheless, Nun's legacy extends to all generations through his son. Indeed, Joshua is a gift to posterity for perpetuity.

As a Slave

Born during the weary years of Israel's bondage, Joshua spent his youth as a slave in Egypt (Exod. 2:23-25; 6:5-9). He knew something of the lash of the whip, the almost impossible task of the brick fields, and Israel's deep longing for deliverance. He witnessed the moral and social degradation of his people, brought about by the terrible idolatries of the time. At the end of his life, Joshua exhorted the people to renounce idolatry, with all its attendant evils, and cling to the Lord God (Josh. 24:14-15).

As a Servant

Joshua is repeatedly called "the servant/attendant of Moses" (Exod. 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28; Josh. 1:1). More importantly, he is also called "the servant of the Lord" (Josh. 24:29; Judg. 2:8). His unswerving loyalty and devotion evidenced his ability to handle even greater responsibilities (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 16:10).

As a Soldier

Joshua's victory over Amalek demonstrated his skill as a soldier and opened the door of further usefulness (Exod. 17:8-13). In time, he would lead the Israelites to conquer all of Canaan (Josh. 10:40-43; 11:23). Joshua was an unsurpassed military leader who knew how to plan campaigns, maintain discipline, wage war, and aggressively pursue the enemy. Above all, he understood the power of prayer, faith, and obedience. Yet, the key to his success is not stratagem or shrewdness, but submission to the divine will (Deut. 31:7-8; Josh. 1:1-9).

As a Spy

Along with eleven others, Joshua was chosen to search out the land of Canaan (Num. 13:1-16). It was at this time that Moses changed his servant's name from Hoshea, meaning "deliverer, savior," to Joshua, meaning "Jehovah

churches today generally do not "try" or test the fraudulent claim of Catholicism that the Pope is an apostle, a successor of the apostle Peter himself. No, they keep quiet about the Pope's claim to be an apostle and do not challenge and openly oppose him (Eph. 5:11). However, "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). Since Protestant churches generally do not put the claims of Catholicism and Mormonism to a test and find them to be liars concerning their apostolic claims, it is safe to say that the seven churches of Asia were not Protestant denominations like we have today.

Finally, if the book of Revelation justifies denominationalism, what is the point and purpose of Ephesians 4:4-6? "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you

were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Denominational churches, with their different human names, contradictory doctrines and traditions cannot exist where there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. Of course, denominational churches exist, but they do so apart from the one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God of Ephesians 4. They are not a part of the fiber, fabric, and faith of the New Testament. Jesus' heavenly Father did not plant them; therefore, they "shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

Religious Debate:

Pulling Down the Strongholds of Satan

Joe R. Price

Religious debate is an entirely scriptural means of per-

suading the lost to repent and obey the gospel of Christ. We need not take time here to rehearse the many occasions in the New Testament when noble discussion exposed error and exalted truth, leading to the salvation of souls. Jesus, Stephen, Paul, and Barnabas are among the New Testament examples of honorable debaters (Matt. 21:23-27; Acts 6:8-10; 15:1-2; 17:1-3). Those who conclude that religious debate “does no good” or “does more harm than good” should take up their complaint with the Master. (If it is not a good thing to debate, why do some debate the value of debate?)

Like anything else, the nobility and honor of religious debate is reduced to disgusting diatribe when men elevate

themselves rather than the truth of the gospel. We make no defense here of such profane efforts to defend that which is high and holy. Just as we do not ban preaching because a few preachers abuse their use of the pulpit, neither shall we ban debating because a few debaters do the same (cf. Phil. 1:15-17).

Let me hasten to say that sometimes the defender of truth is accused of wrongful behavior in debate, not because he has in fact been belligerent, but because the sting and power of truth is more than some can stomach. Some brethren become squeamish when the force of truth is applied to error. They apologize to the false teacher for the gospel

is salvation.” This name change indicated Moses’ desire to turn the thoughts of the people upward. Joshua and his countrymen must trust in the Lord, rely upon God, and lean upon his strength. Joshua learned this lesson, but the people did not (Num. 14:5-10). After spying out the land, he and Caleb brought back a faithful report, but the people listened to the faithless spies and were thus cursed to forty years of wilderness wanderings.

As a Savior

Joshua was probably eighty-five years old when he assumed command of the armies of Israel. Yet, despite his advanced age, he was an active and energetic leader. What a savior was he! How marvelously did he roll away Israel’s reproach, leading them into the Promised Land, and giving them their inheritance for a possession. Joshua of the Old Testament points to Jesus of the New. In the Hebrew language, the names “Jesus” and “Joshua” are identical. Joshua’s physical conquests are typical of the spiritual victories that we achieve through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39).

As a Saint

Yes, Joshua lived and died under the Mosaic dispensation. Nevertheless, his life demonstrates eternal veracities:

In every age, the people of God must be set apart from sin, and sanctified unto God. As Joshua was filled with the Spirit of God (Deut. 34:9), so also must we be (Eph. 5:17-18). He was indwelt by the word of God (Josh. 1:8; 8:34-35). Similarly, we must let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16-17). Joshua was ever obedient to the will of God (Num. 32:11-12). In like manner, baptized believers are obligated to obey all that Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:18-20).

Conclusion

The record of Joshua’s life, along with many other individuals, both good and bad, was preserved in Scripture for our instruction. May his example become ours. Let us be mindful of the spiritual legacy that we are leaving for posterity. May we, like Joshua, faithfully serve God and our fellowman. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, let us fight the good fight of faith. As saints, may we follow Joshua’s example of sanctification and submission to the word of God. Therefore, choose this day whom you will serve!

Adapted from Herbert Lockyer’s *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 205-207.

preacher's "method" of debate, thus unwittingly giving the false teacher a measure of comfort and confidence. How else shall truth be contrasted with and exalted over error except to fully expose its faults and failings with the light of truth (John 3:19-21)? When, in religious debate, one exposes error with truth and forcefully appeals to those in sin to abandon their error he is not "abusing them." Such is an effort to "pull them out of the fire" while earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 23, 3). There is a legitimate place for the mockery of an Elijah or the sarcasm of a Paul in the exposure of error (1 Kings 18:27; Gal. 5:11-12). The sword of truth slays the false doctrines of men: a necessary work in order to save the lost (cf. Jer. 1:9-10). We commend every debate and debater who does this work of God.

The Motives for Religious Debate

Christians are at war against a host of spiritual enemies. We cannot ignore the "good fight of faith" or escape the controversy it brings (Luke 12:49-53; John 16:33; 1 Tim. 6:12). The apostle said, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Consider the emphatic nature of the NIV translation here as it describes the weapons of our warfare: "... they have divine power to tear down strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5, NIV). Religious debate is a vital use of spiritual weapons to tear down the strongholds of Satan.

Here, then, is a fundamental motive of and reason to engage in religious debate: the defeat of the strongholds of error which exalt themselves against the truth of the gospel. Souls will be eternally lost if left in the darkness of false teaching. For this reason, the apostle reasoned from the Scriptures with the Jews in Thessalonica, "explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:2-3). He presented the scriptural evidence for his message and then appealed to his audience to reject error and accept truth. This is religious debate at its finest. Have we lost the will to engage in and/or support similar debate in our day? Evidently, some have (except when it comes to debating against debate!).

Our motive for religious debate must be to persuade the lost with gospel truth so they can repent and be saved. Such work will also protect the saved from falling into error. Paul and Barnabas publicly engaged the Judaizers in Antioch with these worthy objectives in mind: "And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have

in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4-5; cf. Acts 15:1-2).

The Dangers of Religious Debate

One temptation we must guard against in debate is the mentality of winning and losing. The goal is not to "win" — it is to win souls for Christ! The temptation to "win an argument" can blind us to our gospel mission. NT debaters did not view debate as an intellectual exchange of mental prowess but as an opportunity to seek and save the lost (Acts 17:16-32). So must we.

A similar danger in debate is the urge to obtain personal victory over the antagonist. Personal vindication must never be in view when we debate the gospel of the cross. When the focus of debate becomes the man rather than the message, it has entered a dangerous and dreadful arena. Keep the focus on the gospel and its power and persuasion, not upon the exoneration of self (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12).

Renown and recognition must not be one's motive for public, religious debate. The gospel debater is not "looking for a fight" so he can "flex his muscles." The best debaters I have observed are meek men, yet bold in proclaiming and defending the truth of the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15). We must be wise in the gospel — not in the wisdom of men (Matt. 10:16; 1 Cor. 2:1-5). The defender of truth relies upon the power of the gospel, not the power of his reputation, to persuade men.

We must not presume to call into question the debater's motives. Some quickly assign disingenuous intentions to most every man who publicly debates the word of God. "He is just out to make a name for himself" is heard in the absence of credible evidence. Such carnal tactics divert attention away from the word of truth which ought to be heard and thoughtfully examined (Acts 17:11-12).

The Value of Religious Debate

Honorable debate sets truth in bold relief against error (Acts 6:9-10). It persuades honest hearts to repent and obey the gospel (Acts 17:4). It is of great value as it calls sinners to repent of error and obey the truth. And, debate strengthens and edifies the people of God (Jude 3-4).

There was a time when debating truth was held in honor among God's people. It should always be so.

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A Loving Tribute to Edward Warren Needham

July 1, 1925-August 26, 2003

James P. Needham

Edward Warren Needham was born on July 1, 1925 in a small community East of Kenton, Obion County, Tennessee. He was the second oldest of eleven children born to Edward Wyatt and Myrtle Alberta (Warren) Needham. (The first child, Modene Elizabeth, died in infancy). There were four boys in the family and each boy has seven sisters.

I, James P. Needham, was the third child of this union. The next child was, a girl, Edna Margret. Thus Warren and I grew up as a pair of country farm boys. Many people thought we were twins, and even in our adulthood, some people would take one of us for the other. As we grew up, we developed a bond that is hard to describe. We did everything together as boys on the farm. We worked together in the fields, we played together with our friends and family, we spent a great deal of time fishing in Grassy Creek which ran through our father's farm, and we hunted ducks together in Obion bottom standing in freezing water with cold feet and shivering bodies from 3 o'clock in the morning till whenever. We often said, "One doesn't have to be crazy to do this, but it helps." Sometimes as boys we would get into a scuffle which he always won because he was bigger than me. We walked two miles to school together in all kinds of weather and engaged in scuffles with bullies on the way home. We obeyed the gospel near the same time, and we both were baptized by Thomas Scott. Warren married Beulah Mae Long, who was our neighbor, and they had one son, Johnny Wayne, who died suddenly of a heart attack at a young age several years ago, and one daughter, Deborah, who lives in Titusville, Florida. Warren is survived by three grown grandchildren. Warren and Beulah would have celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary had he lived until November 2003.

Warren learned the carpenter trade early in life and eventually moved to Chicago to follow this craft in which he excelled. He followed that trade for twenty-five years.

He and other members of the family, who also moved to Chicago, attended the Grand Avenue church of Christ. Warren eventually was appointed an elder and began to do some fill-in preaching. When he and his family visited my family in Louisville, Kentucky, he mentioned that he had considered going into full-time preaching. I told him that if he would move to Louisville, I would start a training class and help him every way I could. He soon moved there, and he and four or five other brethren attended my training class for two years, after which he and two other class members went into full-time preaching. Warren preached by appointment during the two years of training, but took on his first full time work at Leitchfield, Kentucky. After several years of work there, he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and from there to Titusville where he preached for many years. From there he moved to Dunedin, Florida, his last work. His work as a gospel preacher ended when he suffered a stroke following his second open heart surgery which destroyed half of his eyesight and much of his short term memory. He had two heart bypass surgeries, the first in 1976 and the second in December 1990. Following the second heart attack and stroke, he and Beulah returned to Titusville where their daughter, Debbie, and her family live. He remained here until he went to a better world.

His health began to deteriorate about three years ago. He had what was thought to be pneumonia two or three times. It became progressively harder for him to breathe. Finally he required oxygen twenty-four hours a day. Some time passed before the doctors diagnosed his problem. It was finally decided that he suffered from Amyloidosis. Amyloid is an abnormal protein complex that invades the vital organs of the body and impairs their function. In Warren's case, it invaded his lungs and heart and probably his liver. His breathing became ever more difficult, and for the last several weeks of his life he suffered severe angina that was hard to control. He passed away on September

26 at 6:40 A.M. His funeral service was conducted by a long-time family friend, Bob Witherington, who preaches at Seffner, Florida. Congregational singing was led by Warren's nephew, Greg Needham.

Warren and I were not often far apart as we grew up and after we were grown. During his preaching life, he and his family were seldom more than a few miles from me and my family. We spent many pleasant hours together which take on greater meaning now that he has left us. These memories will last forever.

Being the oldest surviving child of our family, he was looked up to by us all. He was always there when he was needed. We are a closely knit and loving family, and the passing of each part is like losing a part of self. He will be sorely missed by us all, but we have the blessed hope that he is in a better place, even though we are not; the world becomes a worse place with the death of the likes of Warren Needham. "We sorrow not as others who have no hope." We all are happy that his suffering is over, but his passing leaves us lame, and with a void in our lives that will not be filled. We hope to meet our beloved brother in a better world. Until then we say goodbye, dear brother, with love in our hearts and sweet and never-dying memories of you in our minds. The following characterizations of Warren have come to me on the Internet from brethren who knew him:

I found him to be a most loving, caring brother in Christ missed by all. Richard Terry.

A good man, faithful to the Lord. Tom Roberts.

Warren was a gentle spirit, a good man, a godly servant of the Lord and walked the straight and narrow path that leads to everlasting life." Dudley Spears.

He impressed me as a good soldier of the Lord. Connie Adams

He was a good friend to me. Steve Willis.

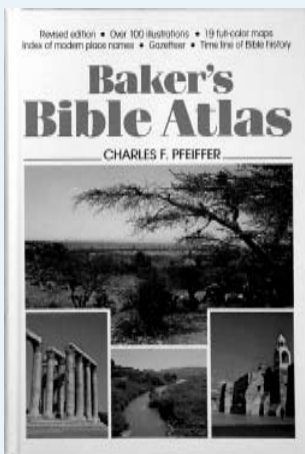
On behalf of our whole family, we thank all who have called, sent cards, and attended the funeral. Your loving care has been most comforting.

On the Death of a Servant of God

*Servant of God, well done;
Thy glorious warfare is past,
The battle is fought, the race is won
And thou art crowned at last.
Let faith exalt her joyful voice,
And now in triumph sing;
"O grave, where is thy victory?
"O death, where is thy sting?"
The stars may shine for a thousand years
For a thousand years or a day,
But God and I will live and live
When the stars have passed away.*

— Author unknown.

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by Charles F. Pfeiffer

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Is Drunkenness All That the Bible Condemns About Drinking Alcohol?

Kyle Pope

The Bible condemns more than just drunkenness with respect to the use of alcoholic beverages. Christians are called upon to maintain a vigilant sobriety in our service to the Lord as we stay on guard for the dangers that could beset us as well as those which could overtake others.

It is not uncommon to hear the assertion made from time to time that all the Bible condemns about the drinking of alcohol is drunkenness. If this is true (so it is argued), a Christian can drink alcoholic beverages socially or within moderation without sinning. While many Christians have allowed themselves to come to believe this, it is a flawed interpretation of Scripture.

The Bible clearly teaches that drunkenness is not the only aspect of drinking that is condemned. When all of Scripture is taken into consideration it becomes evident that Christians should abstain from socially drinking alcoholic beverages altogether.

There are many factors that lead us to this conclusion that we could address. Among these are:

1. A Christian's influence. When non-Christians (or Christians tempted by this sin) see us using alcoholic beverages our influence is compromised. They might follow our example and become ensnared by something that enslaves them to the bottle.

2. Watchfulness. As Christians we are to be on guard, watching for opportunities for good, the dangers of temptation and the coming of Christ. Drinking alcoholic beverages in even the smallest measure hinders keen watchfulness.

3. The sanctification of Christians. Christians are "saints" set apart unto God. As those who both serve God and represent his word to the world, we are called upon to maintain a higher more noble and controlled standard of conduct. Alcoholic beverages appeal to the baser impulses of humanity and do not help us maintain this sanctification.

4. Factors regarding ancient drink. While the Bible will speak of both Christians and non-Christians drinking what is called "wine," it is a mistake to conclude that every reference to wine describes what our world calls "wine" as distinct from non-intoxicating products of the vine. There is abundant biblical and historical evidence that many in ancient times preserved grape juice in order to avoid fermentation or watered it down to prevent its intoxicating effects.

Three Words on Drinking

While these are important considerations, what we will do in this study is focus on three words that are used in Scripture that make it clear for us that Christians should not socially drink alcoholic beverages in any measure. We will consider two words which describe the kind of things that Christians must put off in coming to Christ, and one word which describes the kind of behavior that we should adopt. From this study we will see that drunkenness is only the most extreme aspect of drinking that

is condemned.

Two Things a Christian Must Avoid

A pivotal passage in this discussion is 1 Peter 4:1-3. In this text the apostle urges us to “arm” ourselves with a Christ-like mind in resisting sin (v. 1). We are told how we should spend the rest of the time “in the flesh.” While we have physical bodies, we no longer live according to the “lusts of men” but for the will of God (v. 2). The apostle tells us “we have spent enough of our past lifetime” in certain behavior. Just as a father might scold a child saying “that’s enough!” the idea is clearly “don’t do it any more!” In this list of things that have occupied “enough” of our past lifetime, there are three important terms which all relate to drinking: “drunkenness,” “revelries” and “drinking parties” (v. 3). The first word refers to literally “bubbling up” with wine, i.e., intoxication. The other two are different.

“Revelries.” The word used here is found in two other places in the New Testament. In Galatians 5:21 it is listed among those things which disqualify a person from the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. In Romans 13:13 it describes improper behavior done under the cover of night. The word translated “revelries” is the Greek word *komos* meaning “a revel, carousal, i.e. in the Greek writers properly a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus (i.e., the god of wine) or some other deity” (Thayer, 367).

This word has a significant history in Greek literature. In Herodotus it is used of celebration. The phrase “to make the *komos*” is equivalent with celebration (Herodotus Bk. I, 21.2). In Euripides Herakles is rebuked by a servant when he unfittingly engages in laughter and the *komos* when the household is mourning the death of the woman of the house (Euripides,

Alcestis 804). A *komos* could be all night long, as in Euripides’ *Helen*, where it involves music and dancing in honor of the legendary figure Hyakinthos (1469-1470). Pindar used it of a victory procession in the Pythian games (*Pythian* 5, 22). Hesiod used the verb form of a wedding procession (*Shield of Herakles* 281).

From such descriptions it is evident exactly what Peter is talking about in 1 Peter 4:3. This isn’t the kind of thing where one is so effected that he can’t walk — this is the wild celebration. It is the wedding reception where champagne is served. It is the ball game where beer is passed around. It is the Mardi Gras parade where drink has lowered inhibitions. It is not total drunkenness but it is wrong.

“Drinking Parties.” The third term which Peter uses is found nowhere else in the New Testament. In the Greek Old Testament it is used a number of times. In some instances it is used for the Hebrew word the New King James translates “banquet” (Esth. 6:14; Dan. 5:10, “[house of the] banquet,” Esth. 5:6, “banquet of wine”). In some cases it is used of “feasting” (Jer. 16:8, “[house of] feasting,” Job 14:5; Esth. 1:5; 2:18; 1 Kings 3:5; 2 Sam. 3:20; 1 Sam. 25:36 with drunkenness; Judg. 14:10; 12:17; Gen. 19:3; 40:20 — Pharaoh’s birthday). The primary meaning is illustrated from Esther 1:5-8 which describes a feast where drinking was (uncustomarily) not compulsory.

The word translated “drinking parties” is the Greek word *potos* meaning simply “a drinking or a carousing” (Thayer 533). This word is equivalent to the Greek Symposium — a drinking party that goes on after a meal that can involve either a long period of compulsory drink leading to drunkenness and fornication or (if it is agreed upon) simply drinking and discussion. In Plato’s dialogue entitled the *Symposium*, it is agreed not to push the drinking to the point of drunkenness, but to let each drink as he chooses. In this

text one of those participating in this drinking party even gives a discourse in which he condemns drunkenness. This shows clearly that although he was participating in a *potos* it was not the equivalent of drunkenness (176a-e).

From such descriptions we can know exactly what this kind of thing is also. It is that after work cocktail with our boss or a prospective client. It is that backyard barbeque with a few friends. It is that drink with a meal to “unwind.” Its not drunkenness, but the Holy Spirit says “that’s enough” — Christians can’t act that way anymore.

Something a Christian Must Be

There is one last word to consider which makes it clear that drunkenness is not the only thing which the Bible condemns about drinking. A Christian must be:

Temperate. There are a couple of words that are translated “temperate,” but we will consider only one for this study. In three instances in the New Testament we find the Greek word *nephaleos* meaning — “sober, temperate, abstaining from wine” (Thayer, 425). Twice it is translated “temperate” in the qualifications for elders (1 Tim. 3:2) and deacon’s wives (1 Tim. 3:11) and once it is translated “sober” in describing the character of older men (Tit. 22). Even though these passages are directed to three specific groups, if elders are to be examples (1 Pet. 5:3), it only follows that the character that is taught regarding elders, older men, and deacon’s wives should be true of all Christians.

The word *nephaleos* is found in a number of Attic inscriptions. It is used to denote wineless altars and offerings (E.S. Roberts & E.A. Gardner, *Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, II:379-380, 387-388). The Alexandrian Jew, Philo, uses the word in reference to the manner in which the priests were to go before the altar. In reference to Leviticus 10:9,10 he suggests they

Who Is/Was Jesus?

(An article to share with others)

Abraham Smith

Lately we have heard much discussion about what is true

about Jesus. We've heard individuals, such as those of the so-called Jesus Seminar, tell us that New Testament writers were wrong in their accounts of what Jesus said and did. The "Jesus-Seminar" is a group of scholars who votes on what passages belong in the New Testament. These kinds of discussions naturally have made many people wonder, "Did Jesus say and do what the Bible says he did, and who is/was Jesus?"

Nearly everything we know historically comes through the testimony of men. No experiment could tell us if George Washington crossed the Delaware River on a certain cold night. Someone who was there had to pass that information on to us. These people involved in the so-called Jesus Seminar were not there to hear what Jesus said and did.

There is conclusive evidence that the writers of the

New Testament did in fact live in the first century, the time when Jesus lived. First, they accurately described too many places, events, customs, structures, rulers, and titles for them to have written at a later time. If they had lived in the second century, many of their facts would have been wrong. The reason for this is that many of the things they described had changed by the second century.

Secondly, there were many individuals who lived in the second and third century who quoted abundantly from the New Testament. The early Christian writers cited so much of the New Testament that one scholar, Bruce Metzger, was moved to say, "Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament."

even abstained from any medicine that might impair their judgment or self-control (*Special Laws* I:100, IV:191). The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, echoes the same use of the word. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* he uses the word of priests also claiming that they keep themselves "pure and *nephaleos* concerning all things, not drinking wine while they wear the priestly garment" (3.12.2).

The Bible teaches that all Christians are priests offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10). If we consider the use of *nephaleos* in light of the fact that Christians are priests, we find that the Holy Spirit uses a word that in ancient times was used of wineless offerings and the purity of the priests when they offered sacrifice. There can be no question that the Lord is asking us to have this same purity as living sacrifices and a holy priesthood abstaining from alcoholic drink altogether.

Conclusion

We have seen clearly that the Bible condemns more

than just drunkenness with respect to the use of alcoholic beverages. Christians are called upon to maintain a vigilant sobriety in our service to the Lord as we stay on guard for the dangers that could beset us as well as those which could overtake others.

On New Year's Eve in New York's Time Square, something took place on December 31, 2001 that I had never seen before in my life. Alcohol was banned! That is the "party-place" — they always let go! Why the change? September 11, 2001 made New York and all the world realize that there are dangers out there that are so threatening even when we enjoy ourselves we must stay on guard. For a Christian that is not new information. From the spiritual cradle of baptism until the glorious departure of our souls from our physical bodies, the Christian faces foes that would threaten our salvation. We must be just as watchful as we guard against such dangers.

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Ignatius, who was born within forty years of Jesus' death, quoted from Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians, Colossians, James, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and 1 Peter. That these early Christians were quoting so abundantly from the New Testament demonstrates the early existence of the New Testament.

So the Bible writers were eyewitnesses or were acquainted with eyewitnesses. As Peter says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

Some scholars acknowledge that the New Testament writers may have lived close to the time of Jesus, but they still say these writers were wrong about what Jesus said and did. If this were true, there are several unreasonable conclusions that must follow. First, when these men said that they were witnesses to the sayings and doings of Jesus, they would be deliberate deceivers. Then, why trust anything these writers had to say?

Second, these men would have written at a time when others would be able to check their account. On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22). No one took issue with Peter's statement that they had seen these signs and wonders.

Third, these writers of the Gospel state that Jesus' ministry was a popular ministry. Great multitudes followed him and his fame went everywhere (Matt. 4:23-25). John wrote, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen" (John 21:25). It would have been easy enough for a contemporary of John or Matthew to show that they were wrong.

Fourth, John states his purpose by saying, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). If Jesus did not do and say what the Bible says, John would have been asking people to believe in Jesus on the basis of statements that they would have known to be false.

The obvious conclusion is that Jesus did and said exactly what the Bible says he did. And we must trust it!

I invite you to call the Truth Bookstore (800-428-0121) and order two books dealing with this subject. They are: *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell

and *New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* by F.F. Bruce. These books contain much more historical evidence for the Bible. They deal with irrefutable evidence that the Bible is the most unique book ever. They give irrefutable evidence that the Bible has not changed in doctrine from its inception. It refutes the evolutionary theories of men who allege that these writings are mere products of men's invention. The strength of these volumes over some other religious works is that they are comprehensive and present the case of the opposition fairly. There is a great need for exposure to this material because it is hardly presented in universities or taught in churches.

We have considered the evidence proving that the New Testament writers accurately reported the sayings and doings of Jesus. Now, let us now consider what Jesus *did* say. Jesus said,

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last (Rev. 22:13).

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life (John 8:12).

I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst (John 6:35).

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep (John 10:9-11).

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (Rev. 1:18).

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." After Jesus said this, he asked a question that I now ask you: "Do you believe this?" I hope you can say, like Martha, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (John 11:25-27).

If you *do* believe like Martha, then you should repent of your sins, because Jesus said, ". . . unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). You should confess Jesus to be the Son of God, because Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). You should then be baptized that you may be saved. Because Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not

believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

You should know that Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak” (John 12:48-50).

You should know that Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall (Matt. 7:21-27).

Jesus wants you to believe in him and obey him by turning from your sins. Then confess him before men and be baptized that you may be saved. And Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). But, “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:34-36). The words of Jesus are valuable because “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:3-4).

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How Many Covenants?

Johnie Edwards

We are told by some that God has had only one continuous covenant for man. Who would have ever thought that we would have to teach our brethren that the Law of Moses is not binding today. Let’s examine this false concept.

Prophets Foresaw A New Covenant

Jeremiah foresaw the coming of a new covenant. “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the *covenant* that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Jer. 31:31-34). The covenant God made with Israel when he led them out of Egypt was the law of Moses, which was built around the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17).

Apostles Applied Covenant Prophecy

The Hebrew writer quoted Jeremiah’s words in Hebrews 8:8-12 and applied it to the new covenant. “In that he saith, *A new covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). Count, old and new; that makes two.

First and Second Covenant

If there is only one continuous covenant, it is strange that the Bible mentions a first and second covenant. “For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the *second*” (Heb. 8:7). It is written again, “Then saith he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the *first*, that he may establish the *second*” (Heb. 10:9). Does this sound like one or two covenants?

Two Women/Two Covenants

Paul’s allegory nails it down as he told Galatian Christians that Hagar and Sarah “are the two covenants” (Gal. 4:21-30). The application of this allegory makes it too plain to misunderstand: “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman (the first covenant); but of the free (the new covenant)” (Gal. 4:31). Who would want to be children of a bondwoman?

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Saul's Downfall: Wrong Worship!

William C. Sexton

Saul, the first king of Israel, began his slide down the slippery slope of destruction when he decided to take upon himself the *right* to go beyond what God said about who could offer sacrifices (1 Sam. 13:8-16).

When Saul was questioned by Samuel about what he had done, his defense was, "Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee" (vv. 12-14).

Saul, in his impatient and passionate haste knowingly transgressed (v.12) by invading the priest's office and thus showing his unfitness for his high office (as he showed nothing of the faith of Gideon and other Hebrew generals) . . . (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* 214).

There really is no excuse for anyone to take upon himself the privilege to act in a way outside of what the Lord has said, claiming that he is worshiping God. In fact such a one is depending upon his own wisdom when he so acts. Let us look back at the many such instances in the Holy Scriptures and see the disastrous results in each case. Then, let us be humble enough to depend totally on the adequacy of his message in telling us what he wants.

Moses and Aaron (Num. 20:1-12) were not exact in their observance of the instructions given them by the Lord. God said they disobeyed, "because ye believed me not." Neither of these two was able to enter the promise land, simply because they didn't follow the Lord's instruction wholly.

Saul was a king, and priests were to offer sacrifices. The king took upon himself the *right* to offer sacrifices, in what he terms an emergency situation. Left to our own

wisdom, one might think God would accept it — due to the situation. He didn't. He left the record for us. Shall we learn the lesson: Do exactly what he authorizes us? That is the only way that one can truly act "by faith."

Are we willing and careful to worship the Lord as he directs in his word?

1. Teach the word (Acts 2:41; Matt.15:8-9) in its purity, not adding to or subtracting from it (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

2. Pray (Acts 12:5; 2:42; Eph. 6:18) to God the Father through our mediator, the Man Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5-6; John 15:16).

3. "Break bread" on the first day of the week, take the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34) in remembrance of Christ, who died for our sins (Luke 22:19-20).

4. Sing, making melody in our hearts (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord as we teach and admonish each other.

5. Give of our means, as we've been prospered upon the "first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). We are to do it cheerfully not grudgingly, liberally not sparingly, purposefully not carelessly (2 Cor. 9:5-7). First, of course, we must have given ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5).

We can presume that we have the *right* to do something other than what God said. But we need to look back to see what happened to those who did that. God has shown us. Readers beware!

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Renew Promptly!

The Key to Marriage is Dating

David Charles Morrison, Jr.

Whenever I am teaching or discussing the topic of marriage, I always mention the three rings of marriage. Do you know what they are? We are very familiar with the first two and we want to avoid the last one at all costs. There is the “engagement” ring and the “wedding” ring of course. But, unless we follow God’s divine instructions, there may be the “suffer” ring!

How can I have a good marriage? One that is blessed by God and filled with real joy and contentment? Marriage begins with dating.

We need to recognize that dating is preparation for marriage. You are going to marry someone that you date. That being the case, then much care and concern should be put into the dating process.

God instituted marriage for the good of man (Gen. 2:18-24). Marriage provides companionship and fellowship, it allows us to avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-2, 9; Heb. 13:4), and it propagates the human race (Gen. 1:28). It provides a home where father, mother, and children can fulfill their roles as given by God (Tit. 2:5; Eph. 6:1-5).

Many never enjoy the good that God intended for the marriage (family) because they made fatal mistakes in dating. If dating leads to marriage, and it does, how thoughtful and how careful should the children of God be in the process?!

There are at least five questions that we should be asking about those whom we would date.

1. What spiritual values do they have? There are qualities that children of God should look for in the people they choose to date (1 Tim. 4:12; 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:2-4). There are also things to “look out” for as you consider who you will date. A simple list would include their language, lying, drinking, smoking, drugs, a bad reputation, immodest

clothing, dating habits, etc.

2. What is their relationship with their parents? Are they disposed to talk ugly or mean about their parents? Are they grumbling and complaining? Do they display open elements of rebellion toward their parents? If the answer is “yes” to any of these it may indicate a lack of respect for authority. Young people who do not honor their father and mother (Eph. 6:1-3), will have little regard for God and his word.



3. Will they attend services with you? There is one young man I know who will not ask a girl out a second time if she answers “no” to the invitation to attend services. After all, what reasons could a person give that would satisfy a true worshiper of God?

4. Do they know and understand that marriage is a life-long commitment? If dating is preparation for marriage, then the people we date should respect God’s word on marriage (Matt. 19:4-9). One man, one woman, for one lifetime!

5. Do they understand that divorce is not an answer to any problems a marriage may encounter? God allows divorce only “for the cause of fornication.” Marriage is not entered into lightly and is not “disposable” as the world teaches.

The child of God must have some standards for dating. These standards should reflect godliness and purity.

- Date other Christians.
- Date only those that will help you get to heaven.
- Break off any relationship that violates God’s principles. In light of 1 Corinthians 15:33 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, the child of God must not date “just to be dating.” When good morals are coupled with bad morals, the good morals are often corrupted!

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“Boy Dies” continued from front page

out devils” and “lay hands on the sick, and they recover,” then you must also be able to “speak with new tongues” and “take up serpents” and “drink any deadly thing” without harm or hurt (Mark 16:17-18). Upon what basis would one claim the former, but deny the latter? These “signs” belonged to the apostolic age and served to confirm the word as it was preached in the absence of complete divine revelation (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:28; 13:8-12; 2 Cor. 12:12). Since the word has been fully revealed and confirmed (Jude 3; Heb. 2:3-4; Gal. 3:15), the signs do not continue as the need for the signs has ceased. Now, the need to believe and be baptized has not ceased, for the need to be saved continues (Mark 16:16).

3. Uncharacteristic. A telltale sign that miraculous activity is not existent in the present day and age is to observe the differences in “miracle” and “healing” services purported today and miraculous healing of the New Testament. Did you ever read where someone died while being healed in the New Testament? Was there not enough faith at the Faith Temple?

“Vanity” continued from page 2

The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again (Eccl. 1:5-7).

There will always be these cycles of nature. Seedtime and harvest; summer and winter; spring and fall. There will be droughts, floods, heat waves, and blizzards. Life continues on its endless cycle.

Sometimes one is caught up in the tragedy of the moment and forgets that these are but the endless cycles of nature. A tornado devastates a little town; a river floods and kills several people; a hurricane hits the coastal regions and does millions of dollars worth of damage; a surprise snow storm traps and freezes someone. Life will always have its cycles of nature to which all men have to adjust.

What the Preacher is telling us is well summarized as follows:

... the general impression made by life upon beholders is that of sameness. Going back to the above illustrations, he would have said, “See how it is in nature. No doubt one new day succeeds another, one gale of wind follows

another, and one body of waters hastens after another. But every day and always it is the same thing over again; the same old sun which reappears in the east; and the same gusts of wind to which we are accustomed that blow from the north to the south, and whirl about continually to all points of the compass; and the same stream that keeps on filling up its fountains and sending forth its waters to the sea. And if you will look at the world of humanity it is the same. A new generation appears on the globe every thirty years, and every hour of every day new individuals are being born; but they are substantially the same old men and women that were here before (*Pulpit Commentary: Ecclesiastes 11*).

The monotony of life weighs on man. He gets up every day at 6:00 o’clock to be at work by 8:00. He eats his bowl of cereal, fights the morning traffic to get to work, puts in his eight hours, fights the evening traffic so he can come home to supper. He reads the daily newspaper, watches a little TV, and goes to bed. Tomorrow he repeats the same cycle all over again. He looks forward to the weekend, but inevitably the weekend is followed by another Monday morning when he starts the cycle all over again.

The uneasiness of man. Man’s natural makeup is to never be satisfied with his present circumstances in life. Solomon observed, “All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (Eccl. 1:8). Man’s desire to see things is never quenched nor does he ever think he has heard enough.

A teenager has to have the latest CD by his favorite band. He purchases the CD and listens to his favorite songs, over and over. We watch one TV sit com; when it is finished we want to watch something else. A woman buys a new pair of shoes and is satisfied with them for a while; then she wants another new pair of shoes. A man puts money in his savings and feels good about it; then he thinks he needs to put in more. He never reaches the point when he says, “I have enough. I don’t want any more.”

The restless spirit of man is very rarely satisfied for any long period of time, regardless of what specific differences men have sought to satisfy. Augustine long ago said, “O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart findeth no rest until it resteth in thee.”

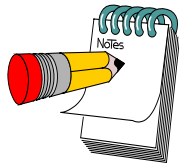
Solomon’s introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes begins with this observation about the vanity of life when viewed from the standpoint of mankind — “under the sun.” He is not a pessimist; he is directing men’s thoughts to how little satisfying are the temporal things of life. Those who are trying to quench their spirit by filling their cup with more activities and things in life will ultimately burn out or die trying. This world cannot satisfy the eternal longings within man’s nature. That is the first message of the book

of Ecclesiastes and it is a message that modern man, in this secular age, needs to learn.

Some have already realized that a slower paced life, away from the rat race, provides them more gratification. Whatever they end up choosing, one thing is sure — they have concluded that the endless pursuit of things and activities does not satisfy man's deepest needs. That is the first lesson in Solomon's words as the Preacher.

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Quips & Quotes



Stress, Cash Cited For Teen Drug Use

“Washington — A survey of American children and parents has found a mix of three ingredients can lead to substance abuse: boredom, stress and extra money.

“The annual study by Columbia University's National center on Addiction and Substance Abuse also found students attending smaller schools or religious schools are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.

“Joseph Califano, Jr., the center's chairman and president, said 13.8 million teens — about 55 percent of all kids — are at moderate or high risk of substance abuse.

“Parental engagement in their child's life is the best protection mom and dad can provide,” he said.

“The study found that children ages 12 to 27 who are frequently bored are 50 percent more likely to smoke, drink, get drunk or use illegal drugs. And kids with \$25 or more a week in spending

money are nearly twice as likely to smoke, drink or use drugs as children with less money.

“Anxiety is another risk factor. The study found that youngsters who said they're highly stressed are twice as likely as low-stress kids to smoke, drink or use drugs.

“High stress was experienced more among girls than boys, with nearly one in three girls saying they were highly stressed, compared with fewer than one in four boys” (The Indianapolis Star [August 24, 2003], A9).

Fired Up

“Many pastors have had the discomfort of conducting funeral services for those whose salvation is less than secure. But one New Mexican family says the Rev. Scott Mansfield went too far in saying Ben Martinez before he died, had been ‘living in sin,’ ‘lukewarm in his faith,’ and that ‘the Lord vomited people like Ben out of his mouth to hell.’ Being Americans, they sued. Mansfield and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe deny the comments were made, but argue that any such sermon is protected by the First Amendment” (Christianity Today [September 2003], 23).

Go Figure

“938 Christians killed for their faith in 2003, according to Aid to the Church in Need.

“127 — Number of these deaths that occurred in Columbia.

“850% increase since 1970 in the number of cohabiting couples who live with children.

“40% likelihood that a child will spend time in a cohabiting couple household.

40% — Alabamans who say they would support Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore if he defied a court order to remove the 4,300-pound Ten Commandments monument in the state judicial building”

(Christianity Today [September 2003], 23).

Church in Boston to Settle Sex Cases

“Boston — The Boston Archdiocese agreed Tuesday to pay \$85 million to 552 people who claim sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests devastated their lives, giving victims long-awaited recognition of their pain and the U.S. church a chance to move forward from its worse scandal ever.

“The deal is the largest publicly disclosed payout by a U.S. diocese to settle molestation charges.

“Finalized after months or negotiations, the pact came with a new pledge from the church to prevent abuse in the future and a sense from victims that the burden of their anguish has been lightened.

“. . . Under the agreement, victims will receive awards ranging from \$80,000 to \$300,000. A mediator will decide award amounts” (The Indianapolis Star [September 10, 2003], A4).

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Paul's Prayer Requests

Bart Campbell

The Apostle Paul helped to establish congregations throughout the regions of Asia Minor and Europe. He helped to establish the church in areas that it had not existed before. If you have ever examined any of the letters that Paul wrote to these churches and some of the personal requests that he makes of them, one might come away with a better understanding of what one should pray for with regards to our own local congregation and the work that it is involved with in its own area.

“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19). Paul asked the brethren at Ephesus to pray for him that he would have the boldness necessary to preach the gospel. How long has it been since you made a similar request for the preacher at your local congregation?

“Pray . . . that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there” (Rom. 15:31). Paul asked the brethren at Rome to pray that he would be accepted by the brethren in Jerusalem when he would arrive there. How long has it been since we made a similar request for those who labor in our own congregation? It has been my experience that those who do such labor (the preacher) often are criticized more for his labors than prayed for, as Paul requests here.

“Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message” (Col. 4:3). Paul asked the brethren at Colossae to pray that doors would be open (opportunities) so that

the gospel could be spread in that region. How often do we make the same type of request for the local work that we are part of in the region that we live in?

“Pray for us that the message of the Lord may be spread rapidly and be honored” (2 Thess. 3:1). Paul asked the brethren at Thessalonica to pray for the rapid spread of the gospel in connection with his efforts. He also made this added request: “Pray that we will be saved from wicked and evil people, for not everyone believes in the Lord” (2 Thess. 3:2). How long has it been since you have made a similar request in your prayers for the local work that you are a part of?

Why is it that we fail to adopt into our own prayers, whether our own individual prayers or the ones that we lead before the congregation, such requests that Paul asked of the brethren in these places? Paul had some very real concerns, as expressed by these requests of his. Should we not have the same type of concerns for the local work that we are a part of.

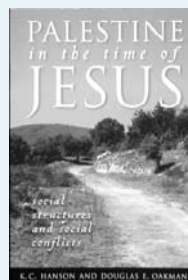
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