

Advice For Graduates

Heath Rogers

(Note: The following is a Baccalaureate address that I prepared to make to the 2005 graduating class of Edna High School in Edna, Texas. I prepared it, but never got the chance to delivered it. A few hours before the service was to be held I was struck with the severe pain of passing a kidney stone. The pain took me to the emergency room and, by the time the service began, I was under the influence of some very powerful pain medication. Although I was not able to deliver the thoughts at the service, I did run them in our weekly column in the local newspaper.)

Baccalaureate Address

Edna High School, Class of 2005

Jesus spoke the following words as his conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. "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. 7:24-27).

You are about to begin a new chapter in your life that will bring you into adulthood. Some important decisions are approaching quickly on the horizon. The choices that

you make (good or bad) will lay the foundation for the rest of your life.

Jesus teaches that a young man/woman who makes the right decisions will have the strength and stability to withstand the storms of life. Those who ignore his teaching, and make foolish decisions, will not withstand the storms of life. Let's consider some of these decisions.

- The decision of who you will marry will likely be made during the next few years. This is the second most important decision that you will ever make (the most important is choosing to become a Christian). Marriage is for life (Rom. 7:2-3). Young men, take your time and look for Ms. Right, not Ms. Right Now. Young ladies, take your time and look for Mr. Right, don't settle for Mr. Right Now. Find the person who is worth giving yourself to, not throwing yourself at.

- Good jobs are getting harder and harder to find. You need to spend the next few years making yourself as employable as you can. Many of you will be going away to college or trade school. Do the best you can. Get the education, training and experience that you will need to find a good job to support yourself and your family (1 Tim. 5:8). No one owes you anything in this life—you have to earn it.

"Graduates" continued on p. 377



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The Burial of Jesus

Mike Willis

The resurrection of Jesus is so difficult for some men to believe that they have suggested various theories to explain the empty tomb. One such explanation appears at the end of Matthew’s gospel which relates that the Jews bribed the guards to say that the disciples stole the body of Jesus while the guards were sleeping (Matt. 28:13). Others have suggested that Jesus only fainted on the cross rather than having died. We look at the burial of Jesus to see what it shows us about the death of Jesus and also how adversity sometimes causes the better traits in some men’s character to rise to the surface.

The Death of Jesus

Each of the gospel narratives specifically states that Jesus died. Mark and Matthew’s account are almost in the same words: “And Jesus utters a loud voice, and gave up the ghost” (Mark 15:37; Matt. 27:50—“and yielded up his spirit”). Luke relates that Jesus “cried with a loud voice. . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost” (23:46). John relates that Jesus said, “It is finished” and then bowed his head,

and gave up his spirit. All of the narratives specifically state that Jesus died. At least two of them—Matthew and John—were written by an apostle and John is careful to point out that he was present when the events transpired. It is presumptuous for men who live almost 2000 years later and therefore were not present to contradict what the eyewitnesses wrote, some of whom gave their lives testifying to the



First century tomb on the road to Megiddo

truthfulness of what they saw. (Can you imagine a contemporary historian denying an eyewitness account of the passing of Abraham Lincoln?)

Not only does one have the testimony of the eyewitnesses in the gospels, the record also tells how Pilate verified the death of Jesus. John relates the story of the centurion confirming the death of Jesus by puncturing his side with a spear. The Jews who had no conscience about putting a man to death for a crime he did not commit were hypocritically concerned about the proper observance of the Sabbath. So they approached Pilate to request that the

“Burial” continued on p. 377



The Truth Is Still the Truth

T. Sean Sullivan

What causes people to walk away? Many of Christ’s disciples walked away for fear in John 6:66. The brethren in Galatia were wooed by another message (Gal. 1:6-8). Paul warned Timothy that many would turn aside to lies (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Those who left Jesus must have believed someone else had the truth. The Galatians must have believed that something other than the “gospel” was the truth. Those mentioned by Paul as leaving the truth for lies, in the future must be those who grow weary of the truth and attempt to seek their own idea of truth. All of these examples are of people who were influenced by the truth of God’s word and then for some reason came to believe that the truth had changed.

In all these cases we see a divergence from the truth of God’s word and an acceptance of some “alternative.” Is that how truth works? No, according to the Bible, it doesn’t. Truth as pictured by God is absolute. Titus states plainly that God cannot lie. That means that every word of God is truth (Tit. 1:2). Jesus declared the same in his prayer recorded in John 17. Verse 17 resounds his words of “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

God’s word is the truth—the only soul saving truth. The plan of salvation made available by Jesus Christ is the only plan. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Knowing these things, how important is it for every one of us to search out, know, and do the truth of God’s will? Why then do so many walk away?

We need to consider some real life reasons we have seen others use to justify their leaving. Perhaps, we have had them cross our minds as well. These thoughts need to be exposed for what they are: lies. We need to know more about these thoughts so that we might “reject” them and “exercise ourselves toward godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

The reality of this article is: we have one hope of heaven (John 14:6). We cannot afford to let anything distract us from that hope. Knowing that in heaven we will live in perfection forever and we will not be in hell—suffering forever (Rev. 14:11). Even when things go wrong, the truth of God’s word, and your personal responsibility to obey it, does not change.

continued on next page

Advice For Graduates
Heath Rogers. front page

The Burial of Jesus
Mike Willis 2

The Truth Is Still the Truth
T. Sean Sullivan 3

Satan Works Overtime
Jarrod Jacobs. 5

Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ
Joe R. Price 6

The Fourfold Witness of Christ
David Dann. 9

Our Life in the Face of Death
Kyle Pope 10

The Danger of Drifting
Richie Thetford 12

The Spirit of Christ
Dave Morrison 15

Parable—The Two Builders
Alan Piner 16

Now, Here’s a Real Problem For Some Folks!
Lewis Willis 19

A Question Concerning the Gadarene Demoniacs . . .
Craig Meyer 20

The Tragic Death of Uriah the Hittite
Marc W. Gibson 22

New Study Finds the Bible Way is Best
Larry Ray Hafley. 24

The Truth Does Not Change If You Reject It

Many people have come to know the truth—through reading and studying the source of truth: the Bible. Everyone who comes to the knowledge of truth is faced with a decision—he must choose to flee or follow. Of course, choosing to follow the truth will set him free (John 8:31-32) and the doing of God’s will results in his rewards (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 10:35-39). On the other hand, when people refuse to follow God’s way they will reap the wrath of God’s judgment (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Why would someone reject the truth? Some reject it for worldly gain—social acceptance (Matt. 7:13-14). Others, because they do not want to give up what they already have (Matt. 18:8-9; 19:20-22). Many reject the truth because the truth condemns a loved one (Matt. 10:32-39).

Whatever reason one might give for leaving, the fact still remains—the truth is still the truth and it will always be the truth. When one rejects the truth, he rejects his only hope. Consider what Jesus said on this matter: Accept my words of truth and be set free by the truth (John 8:31-32). “Reject” my words of truth and be judged by the truth in the last day (John 12:48).

The Truth Does Not Change If Our Brethren Err

How many people have left the Lord’s church over another brother or sister’s error? The battle cry of “Hypocrite” rings out and another soldier turns on their heels and runs from the church. This reason has been worn out by over use—brethren leaving the church because brother or sister “so and so” is a hypocrite. The one who leaves sees the hypocrite as one who did wrong, or one who hurt his feelings, or one who sinned. This may, at first, sound like proper grounds for leaving, but wait . . . if you leave was there any corrective measures taken? If you leave have you allowed sin to continue without proper rebuke?

There is only one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4). If you leave are you not also doing wrong, hurting your brethren and sinning (Heb. 10:35-39; 1 Pet. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:10c)?

When one of our brethren errs what should we do? We must seek to resolve this problem according to the truth of God’s word. We need to correct the error quickly and get back doing the Lord’s work. There is a list of procedures found in Matthew 18:15-17. Many have wrongfully believed that these words contain the rules of kicking someone out of the church. What a sour attitude. Look carefully at this passage. These words are clearly focused on “gaining back” not “kicking out.” Yes, when all else fails, if the one in question will not return, he is to be no longer recognized as one of the brethren. This is when all attempts to “gain back” have been used. When you have left the congregation, how can work on gaining back one of your brethren? Does it say, “Moreover if your brother sins against you. . .” *leave the church?* No! Seek to correct the problem, now! Seek to

gain your brother back so that together you might hold fast to the truth and find your hope of Heaven.

The Truth Does Not Change if the Whole World Refuses It

Another reason that we have heard is, “How can this be right when so few people accept it?” There are two ways of looking at an answer to that question: First, Jesus said, “Few there are that find it” speaking in regard to God’s will (Matt. 7:13-14). Second, this answer points the finger back at you. It is our work to share the truth with everyone else, so that more will hear and obey the gospel (Matt. 28:19). Perhaps there are so few because we have not been evangelistic enough.

To God a few faithful is far better than many faithless (Heb. 11:6). God was willing to spare Gomorrah for the sake of ten souls who would not reject him (Gen. 18:32). Jesus died on the cross at a point where only eleven chosen men and the disciples totaled one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:13-15). One hundred twenty faithful out of the entire population of the earth and Christ still went to the cross to save them from sin. Few or many makes no difference with regard to the price that was paid (Heb. 10:22-28).

The world cannot be allowed to set your standards. We must obey God’s truth not the world’s popular decisions (Jas. 4:4-8; 1 John 2:15-17). We must obey God’s truth even when our “friends” mock us (1 Pet. 4:1-4). We must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). If the whole world rejects God—“they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pet. 4:5).

Conclusion

Your only hope is this book—the Bible: God’s revealed will for your life. Do not reject your only hope. Rejecting the Bible is the same as rejecting a rope that is thrown out to save you from drowning. In our case God is holding on to the other end and his rope will save your soul from destruction. For you to get to Heaven you must obey the truth and worship God with your brethren in a local congregation. To succeed you must rely on your brethren; be patient with them and they must be patient with you. Everyone of us must trust and do the truth no matter what.

For any congregation to be what it needs to be, we must pull together, never running away from the battle. When a brother or sister enters into error, we must work to gain him/her back until they absolutely refuse to return. Then we must move on in our battle without them. We cannot walk away from problems. Problems must be resolved. Sin must be corrected and the Lord’s work must continue to be done. “Do you also want to go away?” “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:67-68).

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Satan Works Overtime

Jarrod Jacobs

The Scriptures describe Satan as being active! In Job's day, we see Satan "going to and fro in the earth, and . . . walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7; 2:2). Satan was walking all over the earth looking for a righteous man. Peter warned, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). A lioness will creep and wait patiently for her time to strike and kill the gazelle. In hunting she is active, and has a goal in mind—food for herself and her cubs. Notice, Satan is also described as being as active as that hungry, hunting lion! Jesus said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). He is the author of lies and murder, and his actions continue to this day. Notice the terminology used in reference to Satan. Satan is not sitting somewhere on a beach relaxing, is he? We do not get the impression that Satan gets up some mornings and says, "Today, I will take the morning off." Look at this world. Satan has his hand in the TV stations, in the newspaper, in magazines, in radios. He is in our schools, our military, our government, and in our homes. No, friends, Satan does not rest! In fact, Satan seems to be working *overtime*!

Satan Works Overtime In Families

Observe the character and content of most families, and we will see Satan's work. Divorce, abuse (verbal, physical, etc.), ungodly behavior, being lax in training the children, hypocritical behavior, and many other things are present in families due to Satan's influence. Remember, as goes the home, so goes the nation. Therefore, we find Satan working *overtime* in the home, and especially in the homes of Christians to lure them away from God and his will.

Satan Works Overtime In Government

When laws of men are enacted which encourage and sanction sin (ex: gambling/lotteries, legalized alcohol, abortion of babies, homosexuality, etc.), you can rest assured that Satan has been working overtime among our government's leaders! He has been working among the nations of men ever since government began. Consider the wicked kings God names in the Old Testament, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles! Then, look into the New Testament and be reminded of the sins of Herod the Great,

Agrippa I and II, Caesar, etc. In studying these leaders, we find such sins as pride, lying, stealing, etc. When we look at government leaders today, we find many of them falling into the same trap! These facts all bear record to the fact that Satan has been at work in the government!

Satan Works Overtime Among Individuals

The book of 1 John lets us know that men are tempted with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (2:15-17). We are told that Satan walks around as a lion looking for his next meal (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan has not stopped yet, but continues to look for the "weak," "sickly," and those who are just unaware of their surroundings. When we see folks caught up in alcoholism, abusive behavior with others, lying, stealing, pornography, just being unfaithful to God, ignorant of his word, not praying, not living as we should in Christ, etc., we are seeing the evidence of a people who are victims of Satan. Yes, Satan works overtime!

My observation is that many Christians are lax in their attitude toward Satan and his work. For this, we can also thank Satan, for he wants folks to be unimpressed with him, and make light of his tactics. If folks think Satan is a myth, or a joke, he is happy with this, for he knows such people will not take him seriously, and therefore will not take the salvation of their souls seriously, either (contrast Jesus' teaching: Matt. 16:26). Solomon wrote, "Fools mock at sin" (Prov. 14:9). How Satan loves those "fools"! He also wants more people to be foolish, and he works "overtime" at making sure this happens!

Conclusion

Can we fight against Satan? Absolutely! He is powerful, but Christ has given us the weapons and armor for fighting Satan (Eph. 6:10-17; Rom. 13:12, 14; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). Now we must *use them*! Perhaps we forgot that we are at war with Satan. Let us awake from sleep and be busy fighting temptation, as well as living a faithful life (1 Cor. 15:58). Look to God (not self) for strength (Phil. 4:13). Exercise your senses (Heb. 5:14). We can win!

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Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ

Joe R. Price

The apostles are a gift Christ gave to the world and to his church for the purpose of salvation and edification (Eph. 4:7-16). Entrusted with the gospel of salvation, the apostles of Christ fully preached its saving message to the world.

An apostle is literally “one sent forth” (Vine 30). The word is applied in the New Testament to any number of individuals who were sent forth on any number of tasks (Heb. 3:1; Acts 14:14; 13:3; 2 Cor. 8:23).

Our interest here is to consider the men whom Jesus chose, appointed and sent into the world to bear the particular fruit of preaching and confirming the gospel that would be revealed to them by God: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16; cf. 6:70). Thus it is recorded that Jesus “chose twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:13). The Lord replaced Judas (who fell from his apostleship and betrayed Christ) with Matthias (Acts 1:24-26; John 6:70-71). And the Lord selected Saul of Tarsus to be his “chosen vessel” whom he sent to the Gentiles with the gospel of salvation (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18).

The apostles are a gift Christ gave to the world and to his church for the purpose of salvation and edification (Eph. 4:7-16). Entrusted with the gospel of salvation, the apostles of Christ fully preached its saving message to the world (Mark 16:15; Acts 20:20-21, 27; Col. 1:23). As a result of the fruit they bore (in revealing and preaching the gospel, the “word of the

cross,” the New Testament of Jesus Christ), one can be saved from sin, grow to spiritual maturity in Christ, and have a sure hope of glory (Rom. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:27-28).

False Apostles

The New Testament also warns of “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13). These made false claims of apostleship, declaring to have been chosen and sent by Christ. But, unlike the genuine apostles of Christ, these were “deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). They were not to be believed or followed.

The veracity of their claims was put to the test: “And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). It was not enough to merely *claim* to be an apostle of Christ. There were “signs of an apostle” as well as qualifications to be an apostle by which one could distinguish between true and false apostles (2 Cor. 12:12).

There continue to be those today “who say they are apostles” and are not. For example, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) boasts of having “living apostles” today. When these are tested against the New Testament qualifications of apostles, their signs, powers

and works, they miserably fail. They are not to be believed or followed by those seeking to please Christ (Gal. 1:6-10).

Some may challenge whether or not we can test modern-day claims of apostleship as the Ephesians did in Revelation 2:2. We believe we can, and must, do so (1 John 4:1, 6). All agree the New Testament apostles were selected by Jesus Christ and sent into the world by him to preach the gospel. It is reasonable and scriptural to use the New Testament as our guide to know the qualifications and work of the apostles of Christ. Claims of apostleship can be tested by (1) the words of the New Testament apostles (what they taught, 1 John 4:1-6; Gal. 1:8-9), (2) their works (what they did and why they did it, 2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 8:18), and (3) their qualifications (Acts 1:21-26). We now turn our attention to the New Testament qualifications of an apostle of Christ.

The Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ

How did a man become an apostle of Christ? There were no nominations or campaigns to become an apostle. Apostles were not elected by the members of the church. Jesus personally chose his apostles: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you” (John 15:16). Some have mistakenly concluded that the eleven apostles selected Matthias to replace Judas, but in truth, Jesus selected Matthias and revealed his selection to the eleven:

And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:24-26).

Concerning Saul of Tarsus, the Lord said, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before

Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Jesus appeared to Saul in order to choose him and qualify him to be an apostle (Acts 26:16).

The apostles of Jesus Christ were thoroughly familiar with him, having been in his presence throughout his personal ministry on earth.

Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).

They heard Jesus teach; they saw his works; they touched him. And, they declared these things to us so we can have life and fellowship with our God:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

When promising the apostles that the Spirit of truth would be sent to the apostles from the Father, Jesus affirmed, “And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:27). The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles with full remembrance of what Jesus taught and directed them in what to say and write (John 14:26; Matt. 10:19-20; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; Eph. 3:3-7). As a result, we

can have complete confidence in the apostles’ testimony concerning the life and teachings of Jesus. It is by their message we are brought to faith in Christ and eternal life in him (John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:3-4).

It is obvious that no one living today was with Jesus when he was on the earth. Nobody meets this qualification, and on this basis is not an apostle of Christ. If someone raises Paul as one who did not meet this qualification, it is true that Paul was an exception—an exception which Jesus himself made. Paul regarded himself as “the least of the apostles” because he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet, the Lord was gracious to him and appointed him to be an apostle (Rom. 1:5; 15:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). To point out the exceptional nature of Paul’s apostleship does not prove some one today is an apostle. The Lord had the right to make an exception, which he did in Paul’s case. He made no others.

In addition to having been with Jesus before his death on the cross, the apostles were also eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. Their appointed work was to be witnesses who would give competent testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead:

Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses

No additional apostles are needed to testify that Jesus was raised from the dead. Those who claim to be apostles of Christ are “false apostles” who deceive the innocent (2 Cor. 11:13).

chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:40-42; cf. Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32).

Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus so that he, too, would be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 22:14-15; 26:16). Paul noted that after Jesus had appeared to the other apostles, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8; cf. 9:1).

The eyewitness testimony of the New Testament apostles is competent, having been confirmed “in signs and wonders and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:18-19; Heb. 2:3-4). Their testimony was inspired of God and sufficiently upholds the message that “this Jesus God has raised up” (Acts 2:32; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 10-13; Gal. 1:11-12). No additional apostles are needed to testify that Jesus was raised from the dead. Those who claim to be apostles of Christ are “false apostles” who deceive the innocent (2 Cor. 11:13).

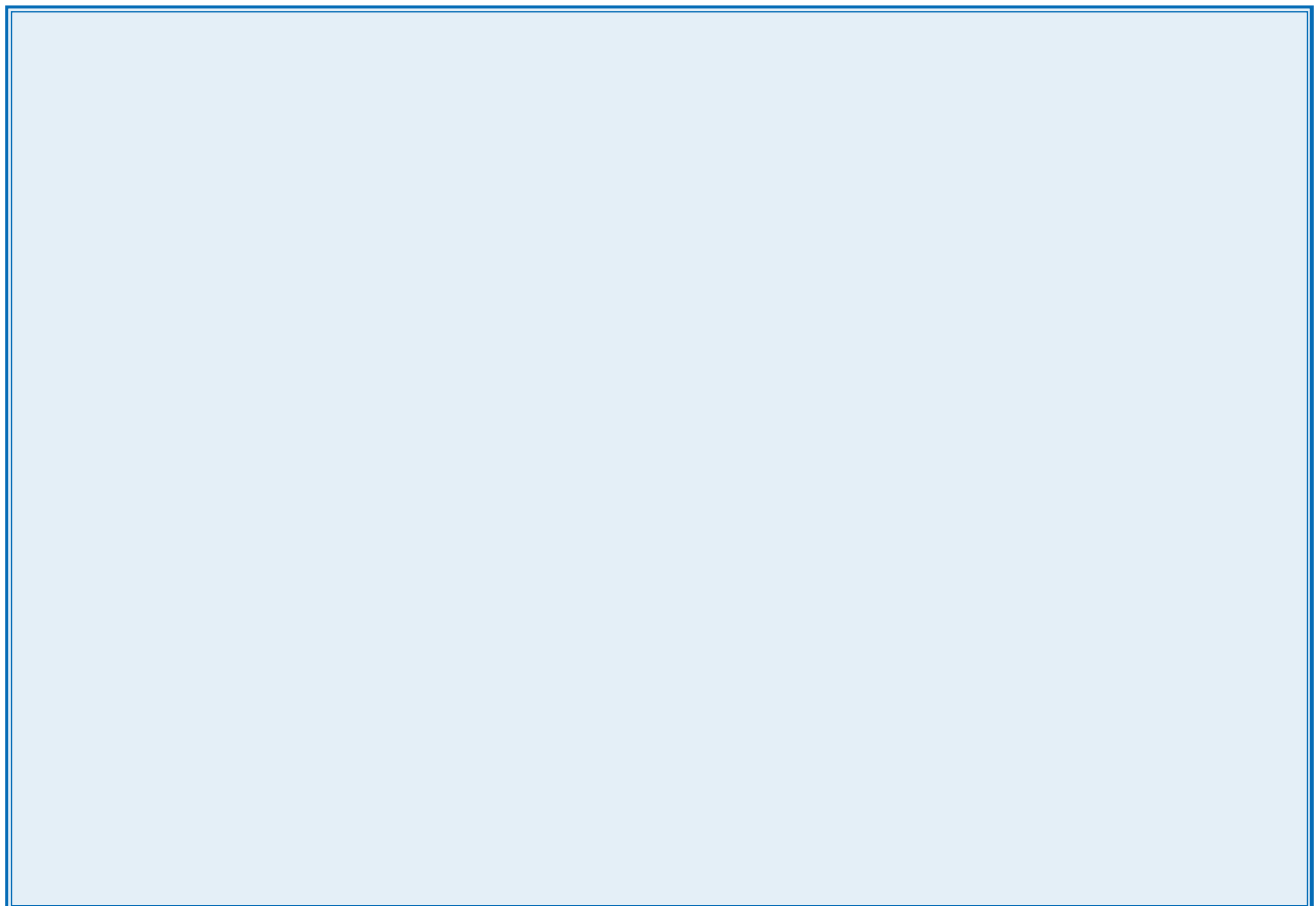
Conclusion

The New Testament qualifications of an apostle of Jesus Christ are:

- He was chosen by Jesus (John 15:16; Acts 1:24; 9:15; 26:16)
- He accompanied Jesus during his earthly ministry (Acts 1:21-22; John 15:27; 1 John 1:1-3)
- He was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 22:14-15; 26:16)

The apostles accomplished the work Jesus gave them. The gospel was preached, confirmed, and written. We have their testimony of Christ in the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament, the incorruptible word of God (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). There is no need for “living” apostles today because we have the “living” word of God that was preached by the first century apostles. No one today meets the scriptural qualifications to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Those who claim otherwise fail the test and show themselves to be false (1 John 4:1, 6; Rev. 2:2).

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The Fourfold Witness Of Christ

David Dann

The fifth chapter of John's gospel records Christ's healing of a lame man beside the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. This miracle of healing is summarized in the text as follows: "Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk.' And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath" (John 5:8-9).

The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem immediately take exception to the fact that Jesus would do these things on the Sabbath day. In fact, John says, "For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath" (John 5:16). While the Lord's actions did not violate the Sabbath law as presented in the Law of Moses, his actions did violate the traditional Pharisaical regulations surrounding the Sabbath. However, the Jewish leaders viewed these self-imposed regulations as having equal force with the Law of God. In their minds, Jesus had neither the right nor the authority to openly disregard their traditions concerning the Sabbath. Christ responds to their concerns saying, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). The Jews rightly understand this statement as a claim of equality with God (v. 18). Christ only reinforces their understanding of his claim as he goes on to say, "All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father" (v. 23). The Jewish leaders are not at all ready to accept the idea that Jesus is God in the flesh and would continue to challenge his testimony concerning himself.

As the confrontation progresses, the Lord says, "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true" (John 5:31). Christ begins this line of thought knowing that the Jews would have a tendency to disregard his claims based on the idea that there were no other witnesses to validate his

claim to be the Son of God (see John 8:13). The principle concerning the validity of testimony given in the Law of Moses is: "by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established" (Deut. 19:15). With this principle in mind, Christ goes on in the remainder of the chapter to present, not merely one or two additional witnesses to his claims, but a total of four additional witnesses. These four witnesses of the deity of Christ include:

1. John the Baptizer. Jesus says, "You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light" (John 5:33-35). The Jewish authorities would be forced to recall that when they sent to John and asked him if he were the Christ, "He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ'" (John 1:20). However, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). The Jews would be forced to admit that

John was a prophet. As a prophet, John testifies that Jesus is the Son of God.

2. The works of Christ. Jesus says, "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36). As powerful as John's testimony is, the works of Jesus are even more powerful. Shortly before making this statement Jesus healed a man who had been lame for thirty-eight years so completely that the man could immediately take up his bed and walk (vv. 5, 8-9). None could deny the force of the miracle. The miracles of Christ coupled with his perfectly sinless conduct bear witness to the truth of his claims.

The Fourfold Witness:

- John the Baptizer
- The works of Christ
- God the Father
- The Old Testament Scriptures

Our Life in the Face of Death

Kyle Pope

As Paul, in prison, writes one of his last epistles to the young man Timothy, he demonstrates an awareness of the inevitability of his own death. Comparing his life to a drink offering being poured out he declares “. . . the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:6b-7, NKJV).

In our own lives we are seldom able to see, as Paul did, when the “time of our departure is at hand.” Instead we may have to face an unforeseen traffic, airline, or work accident that takes our life. Or an illness, that was previously undiagnosed, comes upon us quickly. In our dangerous world an act of random violence might overtake us as we happen to be in the wrong place at an inopportune time. Or for no apparent reason, whether young or old, natural death can take us quietly in the night when we least expect it. Could we, if death takes us by surprise, say of our lives what Paul says of his own?

Notice, from the text above, three statements Paul is able to make

1. “I have fought the good fight.” What does Paul mean by the *good fight*? There are many things in this life that are spoken of as types of conflict. We face spiritual warfare as we battle temptation. Paul describes this to the church in Ephesus, explaining “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). He then goes on to list the armament needed to fight this spiritual battle, including the “sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness” and “the shield of faith” with which we “will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6:16b). In addition to this, as Christians, we fight against falsehood. Paul, tells the Corinthians that we have “mighty” weapons for “casting down arguments and every high thing that

3. God the Father. Jesus says, “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form” (John 5:37). The miracles of Christ proved that the Father sent him (John 3:1-2). However, the Father himself also directly testified of Christ at his baptism when, “suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matt. 3:17). Jesus’ claims were not made without the approval of the Father.

4. The Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus says, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The Scriptures read by the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day proved him to be the Christ at every turn. While these Jews claimed to follow Moses, Jesus says, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me;

for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:45-47). By rejecting Jesus they have rejected Moses who foretold his coming (Deut. 18:15-19). The Scriptures, including the writings of Moses, bear witness to the truth of the claims of Jesus.

Conclusion

Jesus said, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going” (John 8:14). The claims of Jesus are true by virtue of the fact that he is God (John 1:1). Yet he provides the testimony of additional witnesses in order to establish beyond all doubt that he is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Those who reject him are without excuse.

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exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Perhaps in this same sense, Jude urges Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

If death was soon to overtake us, could we say that we had fought a “good fight” against temptation? In the face of death, have we withstood false doctrines and apostasy contending earnestly for the faith?

2. “I have finished the race.” The conquests of the Greeks and Romans brought to most of the ancient world a love of sports, much as we find in our own world. The ruins of ancient cities, where many churches were first born, still show the remains of great stadiums, race courses, and arenas. The association of ancient sports with pagan religion and persecution led some in the centuries after the New Testament to teach against participating in or attending the games. Yet, in the New Testament the Christian life is often described as a type of athletic competition. The Hebrew writer, after citing the great champions of faith urges the brethren, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). In writing to the Corinthians, Paul compares salvation to the “prize” one received in the games. He urges them to “run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Cor. 9:24). When Paul meets with the Ephesian elders in Miletus, having learned from the Lord that he would face “chains and tribulations” Paul demonstrates the attitude which would be echoed when he at last would face death. He declares, “None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which

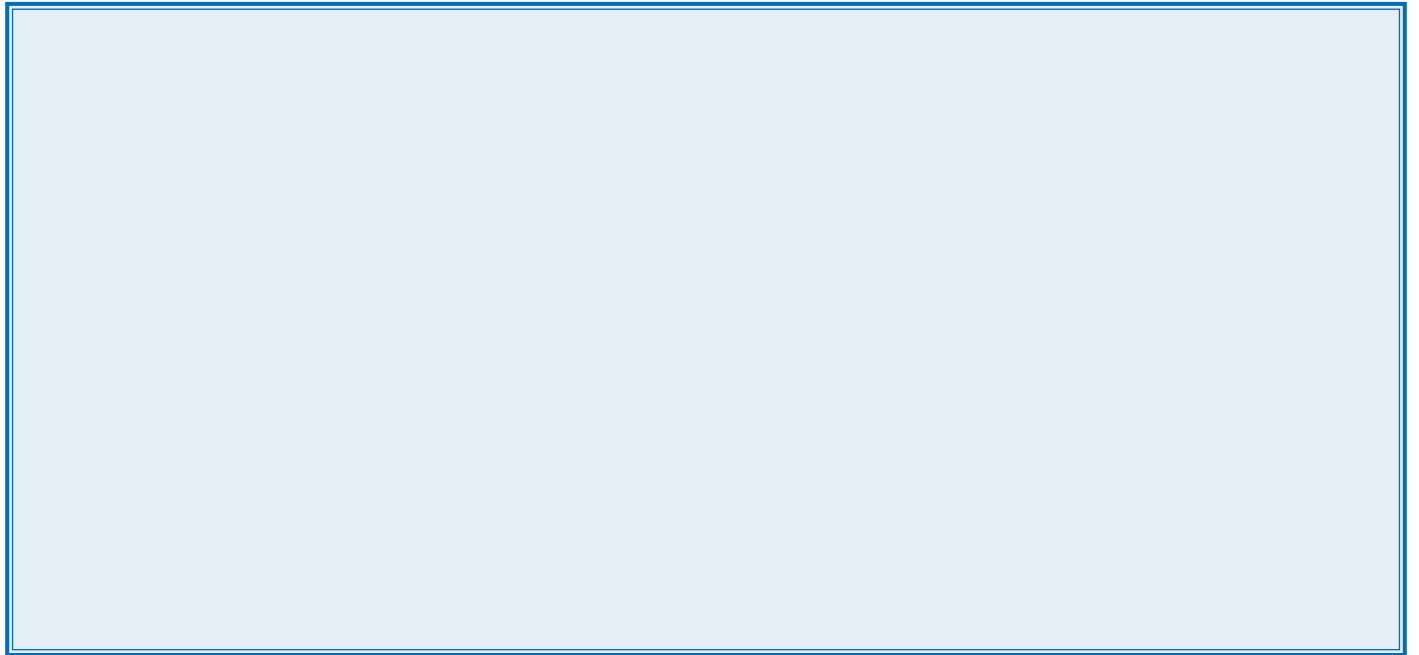
I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

If we could know that our death was at hand, could we look at our life and feel that we had “finished the race”? Or have we been sitting too long in the stands, not running at all? Have we stumbled, grown weary, and stopped running? Or are we running “with endurance” the race that is before us?

3. “I have kept the faith.” When Paul speaks of “keeping the faith,” it is evident that saving faith is something that must be maintained and kept active. In the examples we have already considered, we have seen that in the gospel system of faith we must “contend earnestly” for (Jude 3) and maintain “with endurance” (Heb. 12:1). Jesus told the brethren in the church in Smyrna, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Paul told the Colossians that we must, “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” and not be “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:23). He urged the brethren in Corinth to “stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).

The only way that we can look at our life in the face of death and say we have kept the faith, fought the “good fight” and finished the race is if we commit ourselves to live as we ought to each day. We can never know when the time of our departure is “at hand.” May it be that if that day is tomorrow, a year from now, or twenty years from now, we can, like Paul, look at our lives confident that we have lived it as we should.

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The Danger of Drifting

Richie Thetford

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, *lest we drift away*. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Heb 2:1-4).

We are living in an age where we are seeing more and more Christians drifting away from the law of God. The Hebrew writer tells us that we must give “the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, *lest we drift away*.” Two great kings of the Old Testament (Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:1-6, and Josiah, 2 Chron. 34:1-33) tried to rally the children of God to do what was right, keeping the commandments before them so that they would not be guilty of drifting away from God. Every Christian today needs to be aware of the dangers of drifting or departing from God and that drifting can become a reality when we fail to keep God as the center of our life. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in *departing from the living God*; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Being away from God is the result of “going astray” as pointed out in Isaiah 53:6. The only way that we are brought back to God is to “turn back” by repenting of those things that we got caught up in doing which caused us to drift away from God (Acts 26:20; 2 Tim. 2:19). It is the seed of sin that is planted in the hearts of men that separates man from God (Isa. 59:2; 1 John 3:4).

The Danger of Drifting

Christians need to understand the great danger of drifting from our God. We are told by Jesus that those who are not in the kingdom of God will be gathered out (Matt. 13:41-42). Unfortunately, there are many that will simply forget about God and as a result will be eternally lost. The prophet Jeremiah tried to teach us this very principle when he wrote, “Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number” (Jer. 2:32). The Psalmist wrote, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17). God, through the apostle Peter, tells us that it would have been better if we had never known the

truth concerning Jesus, than to know it and then turn from it (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Yet today, there are many who will depart from the faith and turn to the teaching of men (1 Tim. 4:12). Brethren, this happens mainly because of a lack of consistent Bible study. It is a fact that we can fall from the grace of God and that is why we must recognize how serious it is to ensure that we are following God’s directions. Israel fell from God’s grace, and we too can fall. God gives us every opportunity to overcome trials and tribulations in our life (1 Cor. 10:11-13).

... There are many who will depart from the faith and turn to the teaching of men (1 Tim. 4:12). Brethren, this happens mainly because of a lack of consistent Bible study.

We must look for the escape route so that we will not become guilty of falling into sin and drifting away from God. In addition, we must understand that God’s ways are equal to everyone. There is no partiality with God (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). We are all responsible for our own life as far as religion and God are concerned (Ezek. 18:21-25).

Various Reasons For Drifting From God

There are numerous reasons why Christians today drift away from God. Because of this, there is no way I can

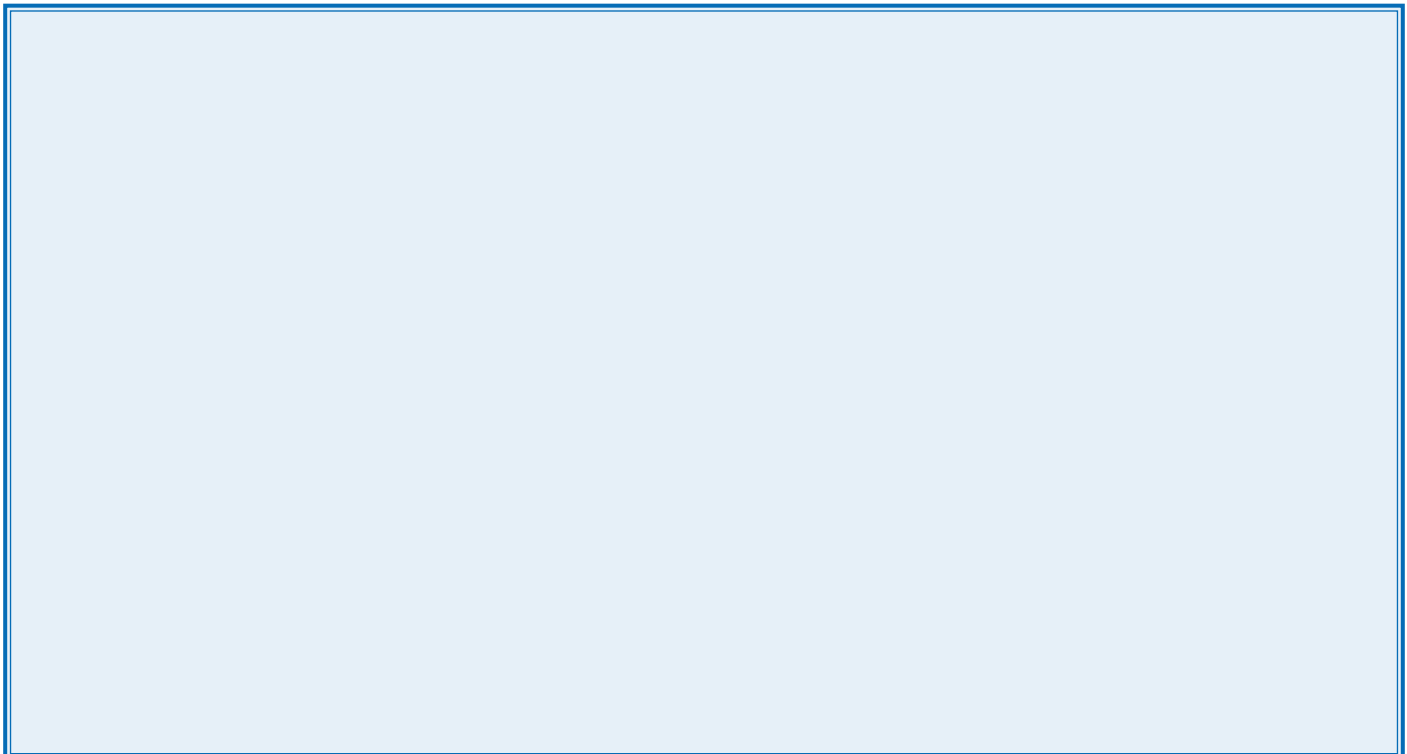
touch on all of them, but I will mention a few that seem too prevalent in our lives today. Several Christians become influenced by various doctrines that are being taught by some that are not in harmony with the word of God. Christians can become guilty of following the “man” instead of following “God.” The apostle Paul warned about this in Ephesians 4:14: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” The Galatian brethren were influenced by others along this line and the apostle Paul addressed this problem early in his Galatian letter (Gal. 1:6-12). We have a responsibility as mature Christians to do as the Bereans did back in the first century and that is to search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so (Acts 17:11). When we fail to do this, we often are caught up with false teaching and before we know it, we find ourselves drifting away from the law of God. An over abundance of self-confidence has caused some to drift away. How foolish we as Christians can be at times to trust in ourselves rather than God (Prov. 28:26). The apostle Peter fell into this trap when he denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:31-34). Our children are drifting away from God at an alarming rate simply because we as parents are not “bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). We are told to “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). It takes work to properly train a child, to mold the child into what God wants him to be. We, as parents, have that responsibility. However, before we can properly train up a child we

must first know God’s law and practice it in our own life. We cannot expect our children to become something that we are not. I believe that the love of the world and all the pleasures of life are among the top reasons why Christians are drifting away from God today. The force that moves forward will move backward when in reverse. Therefore, we need to keep our gears moving forward for the Lord and not to pause, put them in reverse, and destroy everything that we have worked for to this point. The love of God and the love of the world simply do not mix (1 John 2:12-17; Matt. 6:24; 2 Tim. 4:10).

The Results of Drifting From God

Every Bible student realizes that the children of Israel, because of their departure from God, were kept from entering the land of Canaan (Heb. 3:10-11). Brethren, we also need to realize that a drifting away from God today will keep us from entering heaven (Heb. 4:1, 11; Luke 13:27-28). It is very easy to drift away from the living God. A gradual fall is sometimes the hardest fall. We slowly drift into the ways of Satan, sometimes without fully realizing that we are sliding his way. To guard against this, we must stay with and learn the book of God. This will keep us from departing from our God. May we all rally around God’s message as the children of Israel did long ago under Hezekiah and Josiah, and be determined to do his will, knowing that our eternal destiny depends upon it!

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The Spirit of Christ

Dave Morrison

Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." That statement is universal in its scope. If we do not possess that "Spirit" we are "none of His"!

What is meant by the "Spirit of Christ"? The mind, the disposition, the attitude of Christ is what each man must possess in order to be pleasing to God. For instance, we must have an attitude of humility and complete submission toward the heavenly Father, even as Jesus did (Phil. 2:5-8). Without such we are none of his!

I want us to consider two areas where the "Spirit of Christ" must be demonstrated. It is my conviction that a failure to have the attitude of Christ in these two areas has led to many of the problems among brethren.



The Lamb of God

What is the attitude, mind, disposition of Christ toward personal enemies, slander, every kind of personal mistreatment? In Matthew 5:39-44, the Lord would have us to love, pray for, and do service to those who are our enemies. Verse 39, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Our Lord is the supreme example of what this verse

means (1 Pet. 2:19-23). Isaiah 53:7-8, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb silent before His shearers so opened He not His mouth; In His humiliation His judgment was taken away; and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." That's the mind of Christ when it comes to personal attacks, insults, slanders, gossip, lies, etc. I challenge you to find one instance where Jesus retaliated in the face of personal injury.

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

A fatal mistake that many make is to think this is the only attitude that Christ portrayed and that it applies to all situations. Some have the idea that Jesus had no combative spirit at all. This leads to great error!

The same Bible that refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God refers to him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:2-10). A lion is the king of all beasts, when he roars and shakes his mane, the other creatures tremble.

How can Jesus be both a lion and a lamb? When it comes to personal attacks, Jesus has the mind of a lamb. However, when men are hypocritical, when they violate the principles of righteousness and attack the truth, there is no yielding! Jesus is a lion against every foe of truth (Matt. 15:7-14; 21:12-13).

A failure to recognize the difference is the heart of many problems today. What do we do? Too often, just the opposite. When truth is attacked and error is taught, many want to have the attitude of a lamb. Then when it comes to personal attacks they respond as a lion. No wonder so many are led as lambs to the slaughter when it comes to defending the truth of God.

We must have both attitudes, a lion and a lamb. We must also learn when and where to demonstrate those attitudes. Very simply, if it is an attack against you personally, follow the example of Christ "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." If truth is opposed in any form, then again follow our Lord's example in exposing and uprooting error and teaching the truth in love with the courage of a lion; unshield the sword of the Spirit and fight the good fight!

Remember, if we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of his.

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Parable—The Two Builders

Alan Piner

“Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof (Matt. 7:24-27, ASV).

This text is found at the very close of the celebrated Sermon on the Mount that was preached by the Christ. This beautiful description of the two builders comes as a very fitting climax to a sermon that contained so many principles that were to govern the citizens of the kingdom of Heaven or the church. In fact the description of these two builders forms a very striking application to the sermon he had just delivered. It was as if the Lord had said, “I have been preaching to you the great principles and some laws that will govern my kingdom, and you have been listening with very good attention to these delivered truths, but the final result of my preaching and your learning has yet to be determined, if this sermon benefits you it must touch your hearts and affect your living; and this I will illustrate by a parallel that must instill conviction into your hearts.” Then he delivered unto them the story above as the key text for this article; he began by saying, “Every one therefore that hears these sayings of mine. . . .” In

consideration of these two builders described by the Lord, it is important to observe the points of resemblance between them and also the points in which they differed. First consider the resemblance.

These two builders resembled each other in that they both heard Christ’s sayings. It can be observed in the text that the wise builder was said to have heard and to have done. Then he said he that hears and doeth not is likened to the foolish builder. So the story does not illustrate a Christian and one in the pagan darkness of ignorance. The idea is far from this. They were both hearers of the Savior. Now it is of great importance to hear the word. Jesus said, “Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). The apostle Paul declared, “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, we have learned that it is necessary to hear the word of the Lord.

These two builders were alike in that they both saw the necessity of building something. The word was not totally lost upon either of them. Both of these builders quite evidently saw the necessity of a place of refuge. Therefore both of them built houses of some sort.

These builders were also similar in that they both erected a house. There are many people today who resolve to build, having purposed it in their hearts, and then abandoned their plans. There are others who purpose and resolve to build, but they just keep deferring the building and never do begin to build. Then there are others who purpose and resolve to build, begin to build, and then cease the building before the house is completed. However, this is not said about either of these two builders. Both of these builders evidently resolved, began and proceeded with the construction until the building was finally completed. One can notice in the words of the

text, “He that heareth and doeth is like the wise man who built his house. He that heareth and doeth not is like the foolish man who built his house.” Yes, both of the builders built houses.

Furthermore, these builders resembled each other to the extent that both houses were exposed to the same storms. Jesus said in this instance, the rain descended, the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon the houses. All men will be tried according to their works. John, in giving a picture of the judgment in Revelation said, “And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books according to their works” (Rev. 20:12). In the next verse he said of those in the sea, “And they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:13). The rains of affliction, the floods of death and the storms of eternity will try our deeds. We must all come to realize that we must be able to stand the tests of afflictions in this life, be faithful unto death and be able to stand the test of the judgment if we are to receive the benefits of a heavenly reward.

It likewise is implied that both of these builders alike rested in the security of the houses they had constructed. Only the one that was founded on the rock was able to stand the test. Man today may build a house. If he has not built that house by hearing and doing what Jesus has said, even though he may feel a security of heart, *he is resting in a false security.*



But Paul said, “For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Now that we have observed the points of resemblance between these two builders, let us turn our attention to the points of difference. *These two builders were different in their personal character.* Jesus describes one of them as wise, whereas he describes the other one as foolish. Wisdom in building for God would consist in selecting the highest object to pursue, adopting the best means, that is, doing the commandments of the Lord, in order to obtain it, and persevering or remaining faithful in the doing of the commands until the object is realized.

These two builders differed in the practice. One is described as a hearer and doer, while the other is described as a hearer only. One today may hear the word of the Lord and may say “I go,” but then fail to do the bidding of the Lord. One may be a talker and admirer of the Lord’s way, but if he is not a doer of the word, he is likened unto the foolish builder. He may even claim to be a Christian, but if he is not a doer of the word, his claims are all in vain and void.

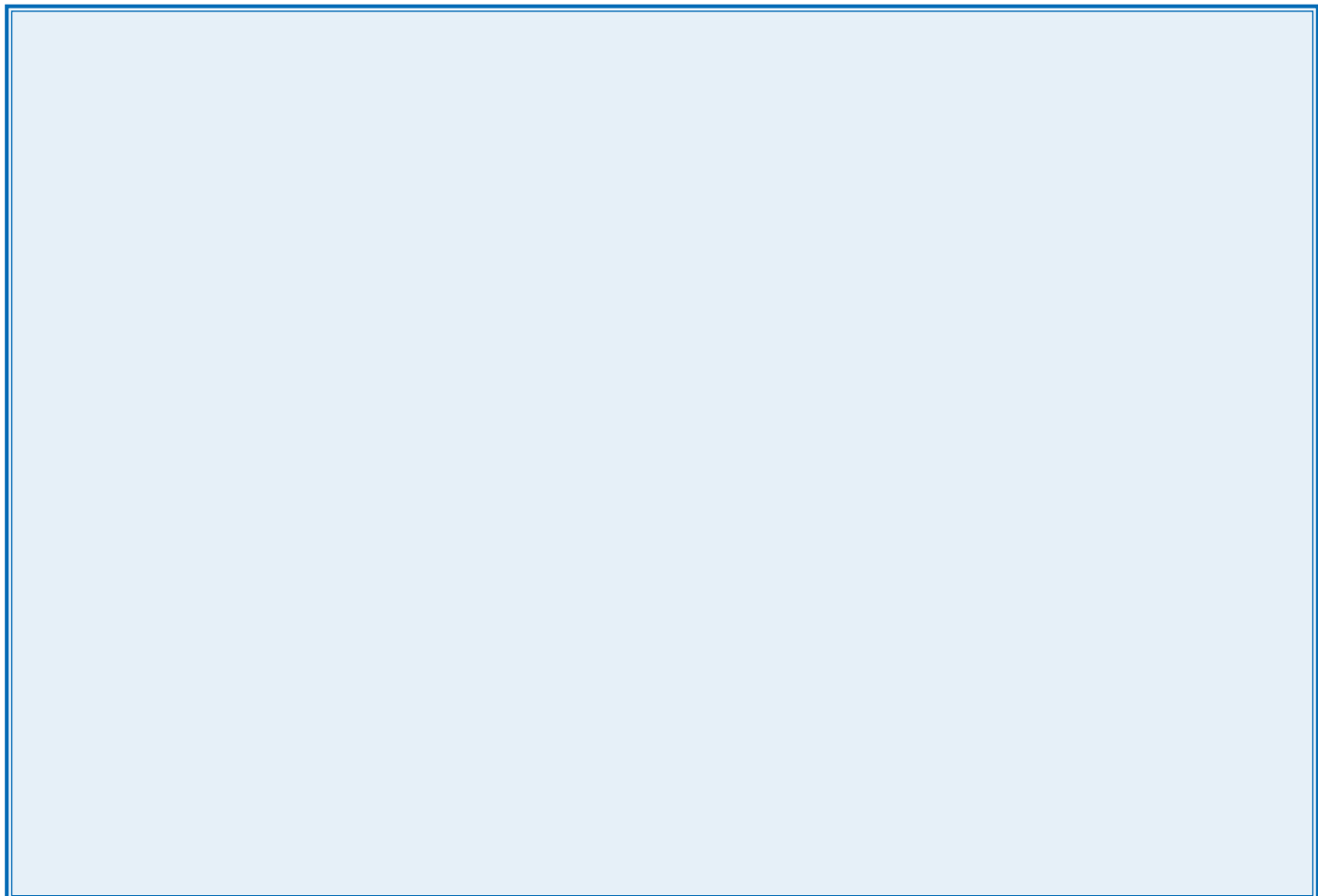
These builders differed especially in the foundation upon which they built. Jesus said, the wise builder built his house upon the rock, and the foolish builder built his house upon the sand. A material building may be ever so beautiful and costly, yet if it is not built upon a good foundation it will not stand the test of the rains, floods, and storms. On the other hand, a building may not be so attractive to the eye and may not be so elaborately and magnificently con-

structed, but if it is built upon a good solid foundation it may be able to stand the tests. Nothing can make up for an error in the foundation of a building. Even so it is true with respect to building a building for God. A man’s life may be filled with a lot of flourishing and magnificent deeds, even good and charitable deeds, but if his life is not built upon the foundation of the Lord it is all in vain. Paul declared to the Corinthians, “Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). He wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Christ is the chief corner stone, elect and precious, the foundation that was laid in Zion. He is the very rock upon which the church is built, that is, the chief cornerstone. He is a strong, firm, and immutable rock. How striking the contrast here in the foundations of these two builders: rock and sand. The shifting sinking sands of doubt and fear or self-righteousness do not afford a sure foundation. The unstable yielding sands of doctrines and the commandments of men will not stand the tides of time as they burst on the everlasting shores of eternity. Concerning some self-righteous Pharisees, who could very well have been classified with the foolish builder, Jesus said, “Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people honors me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. “But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9). Let us work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

Finally, these builders differed in the final result of each building. The man who had built his house upon the rock was able to stand against the rains, the floods, and the winds. This is the builder who builds upon the foundation of hearing and doing the words of Jesus Christ. This is the man who can abide steadfast in the afflictions of life and unmoved in death, and to which eternity can

present nothing destructive. True loyalty to the Lord will stand every test, will abide through every ordeal, and will anchor us securely in a Savior's undying love. Then we can say with Paul, "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." The house, which the foolish man had built upon the sand, fell, according to Jesus, and he described the fall of that house as a great fall. Even so the man who builds his spiritual house upon the sinking, shifting sands of a failure to do the will of the Lord will be finally overwhelmed and dismayed when the rains soften and the floods undermine the foundation and the winds cause the fall to come. "And great was the fall thereof." It is a great fall because it is a fall that involves it in eternal destruction. Paul said that Jesus would be revealed from heaven "with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). When we can understand the eternal destruction involved in such a fall, we will realize the significance of the Lord's statement, "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his

life" (Matt. 16:26). It is a great fall because it will be the disappointment of some fondly cherished hopes. The man who builds his spiritual house upon the sand may think all is well. He may be resting in a perfect imaginary security, but in the end when he looks for light he will find darkness, when he looks for life he will find death, and when he looks for heaven he will find hell. It is a great fall because the fall will be total and irreparable. While we live in this life, there is opportunity to build upon the rock. While we live, many of the errors of life may be retrieved. Many may be the mistakes in our lives, but they can be rectified in Christ. The many scenes of wretchedness that have transpired upon the stage of our earthly activity can be reversed, but if we have built upon the sand the great fall comes at the judgment. It will be the loss of all and it will be forever. Then it will be too late. The time of our building will be gone. The means with which to build will have been removed, and the opportunity to build will have fled. Our ability will have ceased, the harvest will be past and the summer ended, and we will be lost. How important it is then that we be sure to hear the words of Christ and do them that we may be likened unto the man, the wise man who built his house upon the rock.



Now, Here's a Real Problem For Some Folks!

Lewis Willis

Religious organizations, like the Seventh Day Adventists, have struggled for years to find justification for their continued observance of the Sabbath Day. In reality, of course, they are not “observing” the Sabbath at all; they are only worshiping on Saturday, instead of Sunday, the first day of the week. The New Testament speaks of Christians assembling for worship on the “first day” of the week, not the *seventh*.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, wrote: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). These disciples came together, worshiping God in observing the Lord’s supper. Paul instructed the church at Corinth to offer their worship of giving saying, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2). The evidence is conclusive: *The first century church worshiped on Sunday, the first day of the week, and not on Saturday, the seventh day.*

One of the arguments raised by Sabbatarians is that the Ten Commandments, including the command to “Remember the Sabbath,” remains in effect. Brethren have answered this argument by noting that the New Testament teaches that the Old Law was removed by Jesus. Here are two passages cited in proof of this truth: “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Eph. 2:15), and “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). Obviously, something was “blotted out” and taken “out of the way.” But, what? If we would only follow Paul in this statement, we would readily see what was blotted out. He said: “Let no man therefore judge (or condemn, LW) you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”

(Col. 2:16). According to Paul, no one should condemn you for not observing the Sabbath, because that law has been abolished.

The Sabbatarian Reply

These folks say that the law which was abolished and removed was the law of Moses, not the law of the Lord. Sounds good, right? To these people the law of the Lord was the Ten Commandments (including the Sabbath commandment), while all the rest of the Old Testament law was the law of Moses. Thus they say, all of the “ceremonial” law of Moses was abolished, but not the “moral” law of the Lord, including “remember the Sabbath.” So, they conclude we are still under divine duty to observe the Sabbath. Unfortunately for these folks, the Bible just does not teach any such distinction, and I would like to note a single example of their error.

Their Problem is in Luke 2

In Luke 2 we find Luke’s record of the birth of Christ. The Savior is born and laid in a manger (v. 7). An angel announces his birth to shepherds (vv. 8-14). With the happy news of the birth of the Messiah, the shepherds go to Bethlehem to see the child, then leave, praising God for what had been done (vv. 15-20). When the eighth day came, Jesus is circumcised (v. 21). Mary and Joseph then return to Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord (v. 22).

Now, notice carefully the language used in the narrative at this point: “And when the days of her purification according to the *law of Moses* were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written *in the law of the Lord*, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said *in the law of the Lord*, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:22-24).

Now, This is the Critical Question

If, as the Sabbatarians say, the *law of the Lord* only

A Question Concerning the Gadarene Demoniacs or Couldn't Mark and Luke Even Count to Two?

Craig Meyer

Diligent Bible students occasionally encounter puzzling texts. Reconciling them is not an impossibility, but it is a challenge.

The synoptic gospels mention a healing miracle of Christ in Gadarene (Gergesene) country (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39).¹ Matthew's account mentions "two possessed with devils" (v. 28) while both Mark and Luke cite (respectively) "a man with an unclean spirit" and "a certain man which had devils long time." Why does Matthew say *two* whereas Mark and Luke say *one*?

First, there would be a real discrepancy if Mark and Luke had said a *single* man or a *lone* man. This we do not see in the text.²

Second, people can report the same event and yet give different information in their accounts. There will usu-

ally be slight differences. This does not mean that they (necessarily) are deceptive, have made mistakes, or were slipshod observers.

Let me illustrate. What if Mr. X meets me and asks, "What did you do last week?" I could describe the highlights of my week, yet choose to omit many details. An hour later, I encounter Mr. Z and he asks me the same question. At this juncture, I might skip the summarization approach and opt to mention one thing (perhaps the most important thing) and describe my accomplishments in greater detail. Would I have done wrong either way? Could someone later accuse me of lying in either case? In the first conversation, I chose to overview the week; in the second, I selected one thing and gave a detailed progress report.

Thus we see that even the *same person* can say *different things* about the *same event* depending on: (1) his audience

consisted of the Ten Commandments, where in the Ten Commandments does it say "Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord?" Luke said that statement is *in* the law of the Lord; he did not say it was in the law of Moses! So, where in the Ten Commandments (the law of the Lord) can we read that statement? Here (Exod. 20:1-17) are the Ten Commandments, the law of the Lord; *which one says male children are to be called holy to the Lord?*

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day.
5. Honor thy father and mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

I don't see that statement in the law of the Lord, the Ten Commandments, which Luke said was the Lord's law. Do you? Look again! Do you suppose the Sabbatharians just might be wrong about this? If not, these folks ought to be able to show you which of the Ten Commandments says what Luke said about them. Is it not apparent that either Luke or modern Saturday worshipers are wrong about this supposed separation in the commandments of the Lord? Luke wrote as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write (2 Pet. 1:21). He said the *law of Moses* and the *law of the Lord* were one and the same. Who inspired the modern Saturday worshiper to disagree with Luke; to say Luke was just wrong about this? If I must chose which one to believe, I shall believe Luke and the New Testament; not Sabbatharians! What about you?

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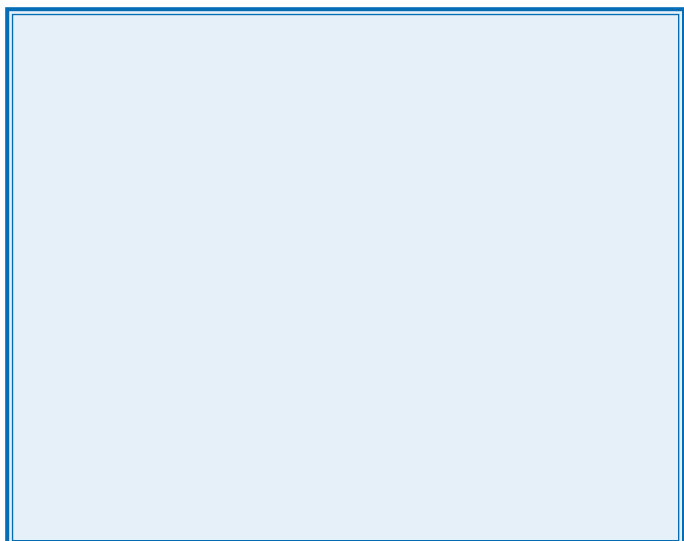
and (2) his objective. If we can see that this holds true with one person, can't we see that the same thing could also guide three people?

So why did Matthew mention two men? And why did Mark and Luke mention one? We can only guess. Mark and Luke may have focused on the more dangerous (or notorious) of the two demoniacs. Most Bible commentators are of this opinion.

However, there is another possible explanation. Allow me to give a second illustration. Let's say three historians are researching a specific time period. All three are privy to the same eyewitness accounts. One historian chooses a broad spectrum approach, incorporating all available sources into his paper. The other two scholars select one man—perhaps a president or a rich philanthropist—and focus the entire article on him. Wouldn't there be an advantage to either approach?³

There is a third possibility. Remember, Matthew was a "publican," i.e., a tax collector (Matt. 9:9). He would have been understandably technical and precise, especially when it came to numbers! Mark and Luke may have opted for a more "streamlined" approach in their narratives. For the same reason Jesus omitted mentioning repentance in Mark 16:16 and baptism in John 3:16. Mark and Luke omit referring to two men in their accounts. There is no mistake. There is no error. Different men—even *you*—can have differing results depending on the goal. Do you want to be *technical*? Fine. Do you want to be *uncomplicated*? Good. Pick one or the other. Just be aware that you cannot be both *simultaneously*.⁴

One last thing: there are many instances in which the Bible talks about a thing and another text—which refers to the same thing—due to technical reasons describes it in a different way.⁵ Observe:



Simple Approach	Technical Approach
David killed Uriah (2 Sam. 12:7-9).	Uriah died at the hand of another, but David ordered his execution (2 Sam. 11:11-17).
Jesus baptized people (John 3:22, 26).	Jesus personally baptized no one. He did it via his disciples (John 4:1-2).
We are justified by the grace of God (Rom. 3:24).	We are justified by many things, including (but not restricted to) God's grace, e.g., the blood of Christ, our faith, our works, etc.
Quote Romans 5:19a.	If we imitate Adam's disobedience.
Quote Romans 5:19b.	If we imitate Christ's obedience.
One blind man (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43, namely, Bartimaeus)	Two blind men (Matt. 20:29-34).
Jesus met by a demoniac (More notorious of the two? More fierce? Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39).	Jesus met by two demoniacs (Matt. 8:28-34).

There are many *alleged* discrepancies in the Bible, but there is not a single proven instance of such. One Holy Spirit guided ancient penmen (2 Pet. 1:20-21) to author one perfect, God-breathed book (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jas. 1:25).

Endnotes

¹ For a fuller study of this exorcism, see "The Healing of the Gadarene Demoniac," by Joe R. Price (*Truth Magazine* L:4, 12-14 [108-110]).

² The illimitable Albert Barnes remarks, "... It is to be observed, however, that neither Mark nor Luke say that there was *no more* than one. For particular reasons, they might have been led to fix their attention on the one that was more notorious, and furious, and difficult to be managed" (Notes on the *New Testament Explanatory and Practical*, 1868 revised edition [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1966 reprint], 91; emphasis his, cm).

³ Barnes further conjectures, "Luke has given us a hint why he recorded only the cure of one of them. He says there met him *out of the city*, a man, &c.; or, as it should be rendered, *a man of the city*, a citizen. Yet the man did not dwell in the city, for he adds in the same verse, 'neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs.' The truth of the case was, that he was born and educated in the city. He had probably been a man of wealth and eminence; he was well known, and the people felt a deep interest in the case. Luke was therefore particularly struck with his case; and as *his* cure fully established the power of Jesus, he recorded it. The other person that Matthew mentions was probably a stranger, or one less notorious as a maniac, and he felt less interest in the cure. Let two persons go into a lunatic asylum and meet two insane persons, one of whom should be exceedingly fierce and ungovernable, and well known as having been a man of worth

The Tragic Death of Uriah the Hittite

Marc W. Gibson

After David, king of Israel, had committed adultery with the beautiful Bathsheba, she told him she was “with child” (2 Sam. 11:4-5). David was in a dilemma. It would be obvious that the child was not fathered by Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite, since he was away at the time on the battlefield as a soldier in the army of Israel. This could lead to an embarrassing investigation that would expose David’s sin of adultery. With his reputation and soul on the line, David foolishly devised a plan to cover up his sin.

From Attempted Cover-up to Murder

David’s plan was intended to cover any questions about the cause of Bathsheba’s pregnancy. He would call Uriah back from the battlefield and allow him to go home to be with Bathsheba to spend some romantic time together. That way the child would appear to be fathered by Uriah. One has to wonder how much Bathsheba was involved in making this plan. Unfortunately, the best laid plans often do not work out as intended. David figured Uriah would jump at the chance to spend some romantic time with Bathsheba, but he had Uriah figured wrong.



David asked for Uriah to be sent to him personally (v. 6). Uriah already had the reputation of being one of David’s “mighty men” (2 Sam. 23:39), but now he had a personal invitation to visit the king himself. After David engaged in some chit-chat, he told Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet” (v. 8). In other words, “Go home, Uriah, and stay the night with your wife.” David even sent a gift of food to make Uriah’s evening with Bathsheba special. But Uriah did not go home. He slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of the king (v. 9).

After David learned of where Uriah had spent the night, he questioned him as to why he did not go to his house (v. 10). Uriah told the king these words:

The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing (v. 11).

One can only appreciate the dedication of Uriah to his service as a soldier. “Uriah knew and observed the rules of

and standing; let them converse with them, and let the more violent one attract the principal attention, and they would very likely give the same account that Matthew and Luke do, and no one would doubt the statement was correct” (*Ibid.*, 91-92; all emphasis his, cm).

⁴ Many years ago, I prepared Bible class material for Numbers 20 and entitled it “Moses Sins.” You see, I had subconsciously adopted the simple approach of Mark and Luke. *Technically, both Moses and Aaron were guilty of disobedience.* On this point, read Numbers 20:10-12. Yet, I don’t think I have to “correct” my title to “Moses & Aaron Sin,” do you?

⁵ It is wrong for anyone to insist on either the simple (abbreviated) or the technical (detailed) approach. Inspired men have used both. There are benefits (and trade-offs) for both. Some of our hymns would have to be thrown away if we insisted on the technical approach. “(He Could Have Called) Ten Thousand Angels”—though poetically beautiful—is technically (i.e., literally) incorrect! See Matthew 26:53. The same thing can be said concerning “Only a Step” (technically, there are several steps in coming to Christ). Alert readers could list additional examples.



‘holy war,’ including the expectation that warriors in combat would abstain from sexual relations (Dt. 23:10f.; cf. 1 S. 21:4)” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, rev. ed., 956).

David had one more trick up his sleeve. Surely, if he got Uriah drunk, he would stumble back home to be with his wife. So he kept Uriah in Jerusalem another day and made him drunk at a meal (v. 13a), and afterwards Uriah “went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, *but he did not go down to his house*” (v. 13b). David’s plan was thwarted again. He must have felt he had no other alternative but to orchestrate Uriah’s death on the battlefield, and with Joab’s help that terrible plan was accomplished (vv. 14-17). What a tragic and sad end for Uriah the Hittite, whose only fault was his unwavering dedication and faithfulness as a soldier in David’s army.

Uriah—Dedicated to the End

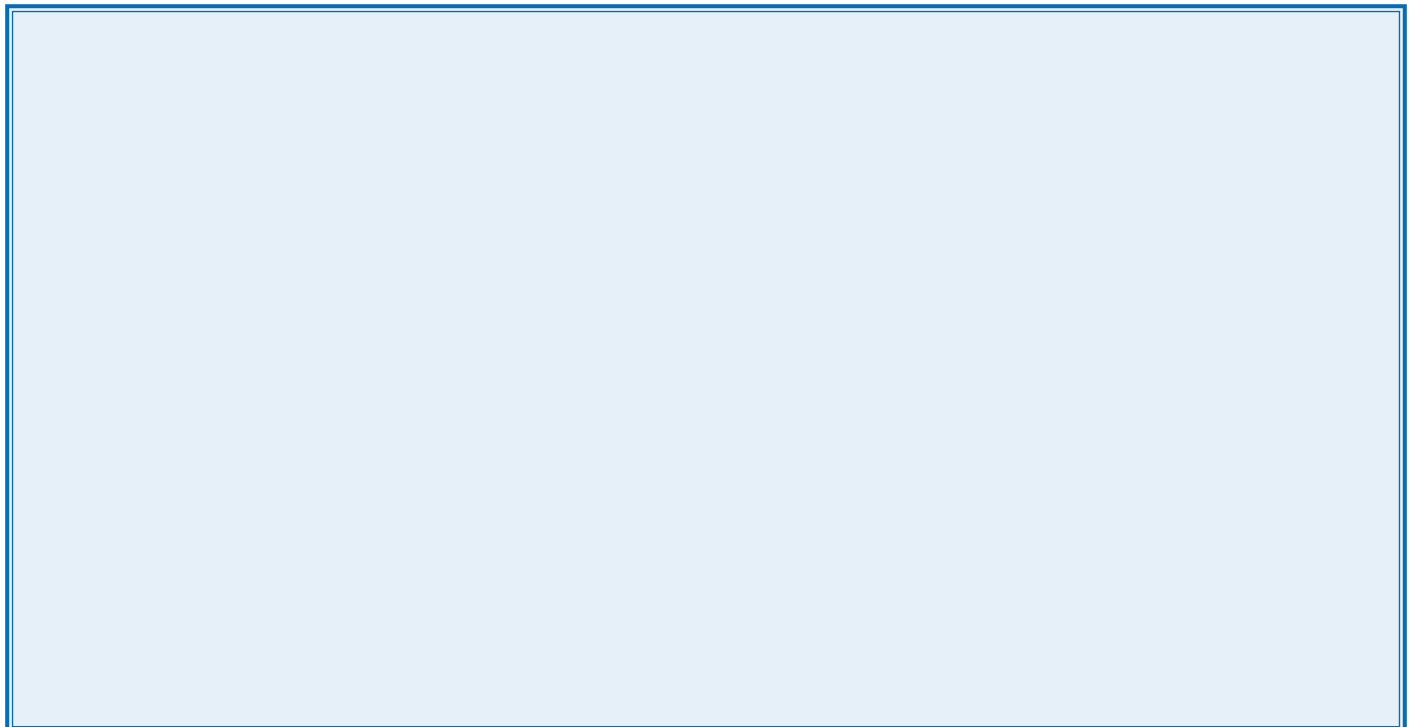
We can learn an important lesson from Uriah. His dedication to his call as a soldier was steadfast. He did not let earthly things distract him or become a priority over his responsibility as a soldier. Paul wrote to Timothy about our dedication to Christ: “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare *entangles himself with the affairs of this life*, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Our call as soldiers in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most important duty we have in this life. Being a Christian outranks all other positions in life we may hold—parent, wife, husband, employee, employer, teacher,

policeman, scout leader, coach, doctor, salesman, etc. Uriah died because he was faithful to his call, and we need to be willing to suffer persecution as faithful servants who actively seek the kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:33).

God was very angry about what David had done. Nathan the prophet condemned him, saying, “Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon” (2 Sam. 12:9). David and his house would suffer terribly in the years to come because of his transgressions (vv. 10-12). Thankfully, David confessed his sin and sought God’s forgiveness (v. 13; Ps. 51). Still, these sad events would be etched into David’s legacy: “David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, *except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*” (1 Kings 15:5). It is worth noting that Uriah is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus: “David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6). Uriah would not be a forgotten man in the biblical record.

The death of Uriah the Hittite is indeed a tragic tale. Sin not only adversely affects those who participate in it, but also those innocent ones who are closely tied to the situation at hand. We need to avoid the sins that David committed. We also need to appreciate and imitate the dedication of that valiant and loyal man, **Uriah the Hittite**.

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New Study Finds the Bible Way Is Best

Larry Ray Hafley

See the report below, published on the Internet, for one part of the prescription for a happy home. Though the authors did not make reference to the Bible, their conclusions harmonize with the pattern for marriage as outlined in the word of God (Prov. 31:10-31; 1 Tim. 5:8, 14; Tit. 2:3-5).

The No. 1 Way to Make Your Wife Happy”

Listen up, men. If you want to make your wife happy, you need to be engaged emotionally in your life together as a couple. That’s the word from two sociologists, W. Bradford Wilcox and Steven L. Nock, at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, who claim this is the single most important factor in a woman’s marital happiness.

But here’s the real shocker: The study also finds that the women who report the highest level of happiness with their marriages are those who have husbands who earn the lion’s share of the family income so the women don’t have to work outside the home.

Drawing on the National Survey of Families and Households, which sampled more than 5,000 couples around the United States, the Virginia study found that even among women who support egalitarian ideas—that is, those who think that men and women should both earn income and share housework equally—there is greater marital happiness when the husband earns 68 percent or more of the family income.

“Regardless of what married women say they believe about gender, they tend to have happier marriages when their husband is a good provider—provided that he is also emotionally engaged,” Wilcox said. “I was very surprised to find that even egalitarian-minded women are happier when their marriages are organized along more gendered lines.”

Here are the fascinating, albeit somewhat controversial, conclusions:

The most important determinant of a woman’s marital happiness is the emotional engagement of her husband. A wife cares most about how affectionate and understanding her husband is and how much quality time they spend together as a couple.

Women who do not work outside the home report happier marriages and spend more quality time with their husbands.

Women who have more traditional attitudes report more affection and understanding from their husbands. Such attitudes include the idea that women should take the lead in care of the home and family, while men take the lead in earning money. (The study findings were published in the journal *Social Forces*.)

Response and Comment

It always amazes me when men of the world are surprised at things which every Christian already knows. God’s ways work best. They are for our good. The author of the article said that the “traditional” marriage concept—the man earns a living, while the woman is a homemaker—is the one in which women are happiest, so long as the man is not indifferent to his wife and family. He said it was a “real shocker” to discover this! Well, God has taught his people that social order since time began (Gen. 3; Eph. 5:22-33)!

This demonstrates the failure of the modern feminist movement. So-called national organizations for women have succeeded in stripping women of their femininity. They have debased and masculinized the nature of womanhood. They have taken away the sweet, endearing charms that make a woman attractive, alluring, and appealing to a real man. Instead of letting us admire the soft, tender, doe-eyed beauty of a woman, they have introduced us to a creature who wants to walk, earn, curse, dress, cut her hair, and drink beer like a girlie man. Their philosophy has twisted minds, ruined children, destroyed families, debased society, and made women unhappy and miserable. The study above testifies to that effect.

“Graduation” continued from front page

- Some of you will stay in the community where you grew up, others of you will move away. Wherever you choose to live, surround yourself with good people who will be a good influence upon yourself and your family (1 Cor. 15:33).

- Always do the right thing. When there is a choice between right and wrong, choose what is right. When the decision is between good, better and best, choose the best (Phil. 1:10). The Bible can help you make these decisions. The book of Proverbs was written especially for people your age. It contains wisdom that will allow you to make the right decisions and avoid the pitfalls of life.

- Remember to always honor your parents (Eph. 6:2-3). They have invested the most in your future. They changed your diapers, stayed up with you all night when you were sick, taught you how to tie your shoes, ride a bike and drive, patiently endured the noise as you learned how to play the trumpet, bought the braces that straightened out your smile, etc. They did it because they love you, but that doesn't keep you from proving that you were worth it.

Psalm 127:4 describes children as arrows. When you shoot an arrow, you place it in the bow, pull back on the string, aim at the target and let it go. Right now, your parents are about to let you go and watch you fly. Fly straight! Live your life in such a way that your parents can truly be proud of you, and others can see that they did a good job raising you.

No building can stand unless it has a strong foundation. That is the task that lies ahead of every one of you now. By making the right decisions, you will give yourself the foundation that you need to make the most out of life.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone. Good luck with the years that lie ahead.

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“Burial” continued from page 2

bodies be removed from the cross before the Sabbath day, particularly that Sabbath day because it was the Sabbath day of Passover week. Pilate granted their request. When the Roman soldiers came to the thieves, they broke their legs to hasten their death, but when they came to Jesus the soldiers were surprised to find him already dead. “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). Had Jesus not been dead, his body would have flinched when his side was pierced, but the soldier recognized what John

the apostle saw—Jesus was dead. John said, “And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe” (19:35).

Only those who cannot think of any other explanation of the resurrection of Jesus deny the death of Jesus. They are forced to that conclusion by their belief that miracles cannot happen and, therefore, Jesus was not raised from the dead. How does one explain the resurrection? By denying that Jesus died, despite the eyewitness testimony of those who saw him die and dead.

The Burial of Jesus

The biblical narrative relates that two respected Jewish leaders, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, stepped forward to bury the body of Jesus. One is somewhat surprised that none of the Twelve stepped forward to claim his body. Normally those who were crucified did not receive an honorable burial, but one would expect that the Twelve would see to his burial. But that is not what happened.

Two men who had previous contact with Jesus stepped forward at the time of his death to provide Jesus with an honorable burial. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man (Matt. 27:57), a counselor of the Jews (that is a member of their Sanhedrin, Mark 15:43) who was respected as “a good man and a righteous” man (Luke 23:50). He had heard Jesus but had never become his disciple, although he was sympathetic to his message. John says that he was a disciple of Jesus “but secretly for fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). The tragedy of the crucifixion was more than he could tolerate. In the aftermath of the crucifixion, he steps forward and requests permission to bury Jesus.

He takes the body of Jesus from the cross and moves it to his own newly hewn tomb for burial. The Scriptures emphasize that the tomb was newly hewn and that no one had been buried there before. (Just as Jesus was in a womb that had not been previously used and rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on which men had never sat, he was buried in a tomb not previously used!) The Jewish burial customs were such that a rich man usually prepared a tomb for himself and his family, a tomb where several could be buried. But none of his family had yet used the tomb. There was no possibility of confusing Jesus' body with that of any other in the tomb because there were no others in the tomb.

Another respected Jewish leader steps forward to assist in the burial of Jesus—Nicodemus, the same man who approached Jesus at night in John 3. There Nicodemus is described as a “ruler of the Jews” (3:1). Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of spices to use in the burial of Jesus. Both the use of the newly hewn tomb and the abundance of the spices were typical of the burial of the rich and fulfilled the

prophecy of Isaiah 53:9, “And they made His grave with the wicked; But with the rich at His death.”

Significantly, the disciples were not in control of the body of Jesus. Think what might have been said had Peter, Andrew, James and John taken the body from the cross. Some might say, “He really was not dead. The disciples secretly took the body to another place and the Jews and Romans just thought he was buried in the tomb where the guards were stationed. Away from public view they nursed Jesus back to health.” But that was not possible because the disciples were not in control of the body. None other than highly respected members of the Jewish Sanhedrin took the body from the cross and buried it.

The Women at the Tomb

Whereas the Twelve were nowhere to be found when time for Jesus’ burial occurred, some of the women who were present at the cross followed Joseph of Arimathea to see where the body of Jesus was laid. They apparently did not linger at the spot until Nicodemus arrived because on Sunday morning some of them are bringing spices to put on Jesus’ body (either that or they wanted to put their own spices on the body, just as many of us today who know the family has already purchased flowers for a funeral still want to send our own arrangement). Those women who were present at the tomb were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and Joses (Mark 15:40, 47).

One admires the strength of the love these women had for Jesus. In contrast to the Twelve who seem to have distanced themselves from Jesus at his crucifixion (except for John), the women stay by his side. Of course, the women did not have the same reasons to be afraid as the men had (they might be suspected as members of Jesus’ insurrectionist army; John was known by the High Priest family so there was no reason for him to conceal himself). Nevertheless, the loyalty and devotion of these women are visible both at his death and burial and in their visit to his tomb early on Sunday morning when Jesus was raised. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene.

The Low Point of Faith

The death and burial of Jesus were undoubtedly severe blows to the faith of the Twelve. They had forsaken all they had to follow Jesus for three years. Having the normal Jewish expectation of a physical kingdom, undoubtedly most of them expect to be rewarded with prominent positions in Jesus’ earthly kingdom (or so they thought). But now he is dead. Their expectations are dashed, but most of all the one whom they loved so dearly had been taken from them. Friday night and all day Saturday were hours of sadness, gloom, sorrow, apprehension, and depression. No doubt the Twelve sat together and talked, cried together, comforted the women disciples, and perhaps began to piece together what they should do now. Fearing for their own safety, they met behind locked doors, trying to make sense about the tragic change in events from Sunday’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem to Friday’s crucifixion. What now?

Conclusion

As is true in many dark hours, the dawning of the morning brings hope. This was especially true for the disciples. Resurrection morning was totally unexpected. Resurrection brought reason to rejoice, a new understanding of Jesus’ work, and a new reason for hope. Slowly the disciples grasp and accept the reality of what transpired and only through the revelation given them by the Holy Spirit could they comprehend what God had done to rescue men from sin. Their short hours of despondency and sorrow were transformed into hope that enabled them to endure the persecution and death which lay before many of them.

The Christian revelation which points to the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead is the only hope that one has that he will see his dead loved one living again. Jesus’ own resurrection is the basis for our own hope of resurrection and reunion with the saved loved ones who have gone before.

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