

Back To Basics

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SPECIAL ISSUE: TELL US PLAINLY

Johnie Edwards

Most religious teaching, preaching, and writing is not getting down to where folks live. When the average reader and pew listener is found asking, “What did he say?”, we need to get back to basics and telling it plainly!

THE TEXT. The text introducing this special issue is found as “Jesus walked in the temple of Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (Jn. 10:23-24). A reading of John 10:25-42 will show us how plainly Jesus answered them.

TRUTH DESIGNED TO BE UNDERSTOOD. Writing the Ephesians Paul uttered, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). Do you think the Lord would give us truth, tell us to understand it, and then make it so difficult that it could not be understood? I think not!

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING WAS PLAIN. A good example of plain, simple teaching is found as Ezra addressed the rebuilding Israelites. His teaching and reading

caused “the ears of all the people” to be “attentive” (Neh. 8:3). The teaching on this occasion was so plain that it “caused the people to understand the law...” (Neh. 8:7). “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh. 8:8). The people on this occasion were happy “because they had understood the words that were declared unto them” (Neh. 8:12). A reading of Nehemiah 8:14-18 will show that their understanding of these plain and simple truths led them to obey them! That’s the kind of preaching, teaching, and writing we need today. Agree?

JESUS SPOKE PLAINLY. When Jesus explained what He meant about “Lazarus sleepeth” (Jn. 11:11), “Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead” (Jn. 11:14). Do you think they understood that?

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE. It is the purpose of this special issue of *Back to Basics* to call to our attention some needed subjects which need to be plainly taught. We would all do well to read this issue and pass it on to others who need some plain, simple Bible teaching on some needed subjects. Better still, subscribe for a friend.

SOME WHO TOLD IT PLAINLY

John Isaac Edwards

God has always demanded that His will be made plain. The Lord told Habakkuk, “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab. 2:2). The book of God is full of examples where men of God made the message of God clear and distinct.

MOSES. You don’t have to be eloquent to speak plainly. Moses, who said, “I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Ex. 4:10), told it plainly. Read the obedience exhortations of Moses to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy and see if this is not the case. The message is well summed up in the words of Deuteronomy 11:26-28: “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God...And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord...” The people often disobeyed the Lord, but they couldn’t say, “Moses, you didn’t tell us plainly!”

SAMUEL. Listen to Samuel’s plain talk as King Saul disobeyed God. “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath

rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Do you think Saul said, “I didn’t get that. Would you run that by me again, Samuel?”

NATHAN. Some of the plainest talk in all of the Bible is when Nathan told David a story about two men and a traveller, following David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba, as recorded in 2 Samuel 12:1-4. “David’s anger was greatly kindled” and Nathan plainly said, “Thou art the man” (2 Sam. 12:5-7). This plain talk convicted David in such a way that he was made to confess, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Sam. 12:13). The trend today is to not say anything about sin or that might give people the impression that they are guilty of sin. I need to know “Thou art the man” when I am a sinner!

ELIJAH. At Mount Carmel, “Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him...” (1 Ki. 18:21). Through the courageous action and plain talk of the prophet of God, the people of God were made to know who God is. The people fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God” (1 Ki. 18:39).

EZRA. Ezra addressed the children out of captivity, “Ye have transgressed, and have taken

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strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives” (Ezra 10:10-11). Do you think they had any difficulty understanding that they had transgressed, what their transgression was, or what they needed to do about it?

EZEKIEL. The Lord told Ezekiel, “Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations” (Ezek. 16:2). That is, tell it plainly! With great plainness of speech, Ezekiel spoke of Israel’s history from the birth of that nation up to Ezekiel’s day. He spoke of her birth (vv. 1-7), her marriage and adornment (vv. 8-14), her infidelity (vv. 15-34), and her punishment (vv. 35-43). A reading of Ezekiel 16 finds the messenger of God telling it like it is!

THE LORD. The teachings of Christ are clear. Do you think the Pharisees got the point when Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...ye blind guides...Ye fools and blind...Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mt. 23:13-33). Luke 13:3 gets right to the point: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” John 14:6 is plain: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” And on and on that can go.

JOHN THE BAPTIST. How many preachers do you know today would have put the truth to Herod as plainly as John did when he said, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife” (Mk. 6:18)?

PETER. The first recorded gospel sermon, preached by Peter in Acts 2, is characterized by plainness. Peter plainly preached the death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. Peter put it to them plainly when he said, “...let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Peter told them what they needed to do about that in language plain and simple: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you

in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). Preaching that tells it plainly is the kind of preaching that gets results as “they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

PAUL. Read Paul’s statements in the book of Acts and the letters written by him to observe his plain talk. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 gives the reason for Paul’s plainness of speech.

Like these (and many others could be cited), may we never get away from using “great plainness of speech” in our preaching and in our writing (2 Cor. 3:12). Sometimes it’s not enough to just draw a picture of a pig. You have to say, “THIS IS A PIG.” And then you need also to say, “THIS IS NOT A DOG, etc.” You can’t be too plain!

Special Issue: Tell Us Plainly	
Johnie Edwards.....	1
Some Who Told It Plainly	
John Isaac Edwards.....	2
Tell Us Plainly About the Bible	
Donnie V. Rader.....	4
Tell Us Plainly About God	
John Isaac Edwards.....	5
Tell Us Plainly About the Holy Spirit	
Marc W. Gibson.....	6
Tell Us Plainly About Sin	
T. Sean Sullivan.....	7
Tell Us Plainly About the Plan of Salvation	
Larry R. Ping II.....	8
Tell Us Plainly About Personal Responsibility	
Johnie Edwards.....	9
Tell Us Plainly About the New Testament Church	
Joe R. Price.....	10
Tell Us Plainly About Death	
David Eldridge.....	11
Tell Us Plainly About the Second Coming of Christ	
Johnie Edwards.....	12
Tell Us Plainly About the Judgment	
Steve Monts.....	13
Kids Activity Page	
Aleisha Edwards.....	14
Tell Us Plainly About Heaven and Hell	
Justin Monts.....	15

TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE BIBLE

Donnie V. Rader

Plain speaking about the Bible is imperative. If we don't speak plainly about the Bible, or understand clearly, our efforts to serve God and lead others to Him will be to no avail. Let's consider some plain and simple facts about the Bible.

IT IS WRITTEN BY GOD. The Old Testament writers claimed God directed them as they wrote. David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Isaiah wrote saying, "the Lord has spoken" (Is. 1:1-2). The New Testament writers made the same claim. Paul said ALL Scripture is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Furthermore, the very words spoken or written by those inspired were chosen by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

IT IS CONFIRMED AND CERTIFIED. The miracles in the Bible confirm that the word spoken and written by the apostles is true. The Hebrew writer said, "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. 2:3-4). Paul preached a certified gospel (Gal. 1:11).

IT HAS AUTHORITY. The Bible is not just an interesting book to read, but being the word of God, it has the authority of God behind it. The Bible has such authority that to violate the law found therein is a sin (1 Jn. 3:4). Man cannot alter or change it in any way (Rev. 22:18-19). It is to be taught with all authority (Ti. 2:15). It will be the standard by which we will be judged (Jn. 12:48).

IT IS SUFFICIENT. The Bible is complete.

It provides us with everything essential to live life and be godly (2 Pet. 1:3). It is able to make man complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

IT IS POWERFUL. The gospel is the power of God to save man (Rom. 1:16), for in it is revealed God's plan for making men righteous (v. 17).

IT MEETS MAN'S NEEDS—THUS IT IS A MODERN BOOK. Perhaps some think the Bible is such an old book that it is out of date. Jesus affirmed that man lives by the word of God (Mt. 4:4). Man has a need to deal with sin. The Bible meets that need (Mk. 16:16). Man needs to know how to live godly. The Bible meets that need (Ti. 2:11-12). The Bible equips us for every relationship. It tells us how to be good husbands (1 Pet. 3:7), good wives (vv. 1-6), good parents (Prov. 22:6), good children (Eph. 6:1-3), good employers (Eph. 6:9), good employees (Eph. 6:5-8), and good citizens (Rom. 13). What need is not met?

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT GOD

John Isaac Edwards

With so many false impressions about God, we need to tell plainly about God.

THERE IS A GOD. It needs to be plainly pointed out that there is a God. The fourth word in the Bible is “God” (Gen. 1:1). The Psalmist said, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). That’s plain! Plain evidence of God’s existence may be seen all around. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1).

THERE IS BUT ONE GOD. Contrary to the thinking of many, the Bible plainly affirms, “there is but one God” (1 Cor. 8:5). God Himself said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Is. 45:22). Paul wrote the Ephesians, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:6).

GOD IS NOT SOME THINGS. God is not what many people think He is. To better understand about God, consider some things God is not:

God is not a man. Balaam told Balak, “God is not a man...” (Num. 23:19). Thus, God thinks differently than we do. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Is. 55:8).

God is not the author of confusion. God is not to be blamed for all the disorder in the religious world. The Bible plainly says, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33).

God is not mocked. If you think God can be mocked, think again! “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

God is not unrighteous. Hebrews 6:10 affirms, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love...” Thus, the Bible speaks of God as “the righteous God” (Ps. 7:9).

GOD IS SOME THINGS. Having learned what God is not, we are better equipped to understand what God is.

God is jealous. In the giving of the ten commandments, God plainly said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, or serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...” (Ex. 20:3-5). To have, make, or bow down to other gods is to provoke God to jealousy!

God is greatly to be feared. The Psalmist exclaimed, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Ps. 89:7). It is man’s “duty” to “fear God” (Eccl. 12:13). That is, to respect and reverence Him and do His will.

God is able. God is unlimited as to ability. He is “able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mt. 3:9), “able to graff” (Rom. 11:23), and “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

God is light. John declared the message “that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5). We are admonished to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7).

God is love. It is written, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8). The love of God was manifested in the sending of His only begotten Son into the world (1 Jn. 4:9; Jn. 3:16).

Let’s get back to plainly speaking and writing about God.

TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

Marc W. Gibson

In a world overflowing with confusion about God, we need to speak plainly about the Holy Spirit. Our speech should always be “as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). If we are to possess a proper understanding of truth and avoid error, we must know what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit.

GOD. The Holy Spirit is God (deity, divine). This is denied by some religions today, but in this they deny the plain teachings of the Bible. The Holy Spirit exhibits the characteristics of deity—omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-8), omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and eternal (Heb. 9:14). Peter spoke of the Holy Spirit and God interchangeably (Acts 5:3-4). To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. The “name” of the Holy Spirit is placed on an equal level with the names of the Father and Son, all three sharing in the essence of God (deity) (Mt. 28:19).

A DIVINE PERSON WITH PERSONALITY. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal, indefinable “IT.” Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as “he, the Spirit of truth” (Jn. 16:13). When the Spirit spoke to Philip (Acts 8:29), Philip heard a real being, not the imagined whisperings of the wind. The Holy Spirit speaks (1 Tim. 4:1; Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2) and teaches (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). He also has a will (1 Cor. 12:11), can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), insulted (Heb. 10:29), lied to (Acts 5:3), and resisted (Acts 7:51). These are the traits of a divine person with personality.

REVEALED ALL TRUTH. In Old Testament times, “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was sent to guide the apostles into all truth (Jn. 16:13; 14:26). This was fulfilled when the apostles received “the Spirit who is from God” and revealed the truth of God “not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

When we read the New Testament today, we are reading what “has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:5). Through this revelation, we can understand the mystery of Christ and how we may please God today.

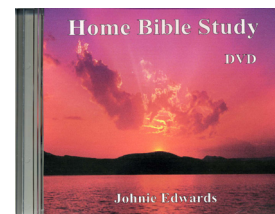
WORKS THROUGH THE WORD TODAY. Through the word revealed by the Holy Spirit, we have “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). The divinely-inspired Scriptures fully equip the man of God to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is through learning and obeying the word of God that we are sanctified by the Spirit (2 Th. 2:13), strengthened through the Spirit in the inner man (Eph. 3:16), and equipped with the powerful sword of the Spirit to battle evil (Eph. 6:17). We are led by the Spirit of God and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit when we follow the revealed word of truth (Rom. 8:5, 14; Gal. 5:16, 22-23). The Holy Spirit provides many spiritual blessings to man today through the fully-revealed and all-sufficient word of God.

Plainly speaking, the Holy Spirit is God, a divine personality who has revealed all truth to mankind and continues to lead the faithful today through the word of God.

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT SIN

T. Sean Sullivan

Sin is a deadly, serious matter. Just as far as Heaven, the reward of righteousness, surpasses any earthly treasure; so Hell, the punishment for sin, far surpasses the anguish of any earthly pain (Mt. 25:32-46).

SIN AND 1 JOHN 3:4. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.” Essentially, the definition of sin is found here. To ask the world for their opinion about sin would be a futile project. The Scriptures define sin as “lawlessness.” Elsewhere, the term “transgression” is used with the same essential meaning (Acts 1:25; Rom. 4:15, 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:14; Heb. 2:2). The original Greek word “*anomia*” that we translate as “lawlessness,” in literal sense, means “against or without the law.” In the context of our life, sin is going against or without the law of God. This is the sense and meaning that John uses in 1 John 3:4 when he teaches us that whoever commits sin also commits actions that are against or without the law, and sin is committing actions against or without the law.

SIN AND JAMES 1:13-15. The answer to “what is sin?” is found in James 1:13-15. Sin is not from God; nor does God lead any man into sin. There is a distinct process to sin: Personal desires for something other than God’s way which entices, then desire is conceived in action giving birth to sin, and sin in practice brings spiritual death. All sins begin in the heart of man. We must learn that as goes the brain, so goes the body. Too often, people claim the right to “just look at” or “only think about” some sinful thing. The problem with this concept is clearly defined in the warning of Jesus when He told us to not even look upon a woman to lust after her in Matthew 5:28. Paul admonished Timothy not to entertain the thoughts of lust as he said, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

When we sin, it is our own choice. When we sin, we take action on thoughts conceived in our own heart. When we sin and refuse to repent, we are spiritually separated from God.

SIN AND ISAIAH 59:1-2. “...your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” Sin is the dividing factor between the “creation” and the “Creator.” Our Creator is perfect; in every expression He is the fullness of the glory of goodness. We, His creation, have been granted the freedom of choice, but also the direction of His true guidance (Ps. 1:1-6; Heb. 1:1-2). In our own pride and rebellion against right and good, we have chosen to set our own course without our God—in this, we sin and separate ourselves from God. In this self-inflicted separation, Israel found themselves away from their God. This separation continues to factor into our lives today; we ourselves are unacceptable and lost because of our sins. God holds all hope of life, true success, and life eternal. Without Him, a good life, true success and life eternal are not possible.

Regardless of sin’s corruption and hopelessness away from eternal life, today’s world seems to play with sin with reckless abandon. The Scriptures declare such as the folly of the fool (Prov. 14:9). By sin we bring about our own spiritual demise. Is there any hope? Yes! (Rom. 5:6-8).

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Larry R. Ping II

Of all the questions one can ask, the most important is, “What must I do to be saved?” This is the same question the Jews (Acts 2:37) and the jailor posed (Acts 16:30). The answer to this most important question can be found only by consulting the all-inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). To be saved, one must...

BELIEVE WHAT HE HEARS. One can only learn as he is taught (Rom. 10:14-17). God instructed us to “hear” His son in Matthew 17:5. What we hear, we must believe (Mk. 16:16). We too must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, else we will “die in our sins” (Jn. 8:24). Do you believe? If so, take the proper actions.

REPENT OF HIS PAST SINFUL LIFE. To repent is to change from the “old man” to the “new man” (Eph. 4:22-24). One must be willing to turn from his old, sinful ways else he will perish (Lk. 13:3, 5). A son once told his father he would not work, but later repented and went to work (Mt. 21:28-30). God is patiently waiting for us to repent (2 Pet. 3:9). Will you now do so?

CONFESS JESUS CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD. This confession is made with the mouth (Rom. 10:9-10), as it was made by the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37), “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Are you willing to make this same confession?

BE BAPTIZED. A plain reading of the New Testament will clearly reveal the necessity of baptism. The Son of God said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). The Jews were told to be baptized “for the remission” of their sins in Acts 2:38. Saul was commanded to be baptized in order to “wash away” his sins (Acts 22:16). We are told that baptism “saves” in 1 Peter 3:21 and that it is a burial (Col. 2:12). Why not decide to comply with this command?

LIVE FAITHFULLY. God requires that one live faithfully unto death (Rev. 2:10). God has provided the avenue of prayer for the erring Christian to seek forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9). God has never required sinless perfection from His people, only that they “endure” to the end (Mk. 13:13). Paul directed the Corinthian brethren to be “stedfast” and “unmovable” (1 Cor. 15:58). So we should be as well.

Have you raised the crucial question yet—“what must I do to be saved?” Be “altogether” saved as you obey the Father’s commands (Acts 26:29). If not, why not?

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Johnie Edwards

It seems as if no one wants to accept personal responsibility anymore. It is easy to “pass the buck.” We need to get back to the philosophy that President Harry Truman stated, “The buck stops here.” So, tell us plainly about some of our personal duties.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO GOD. Our first responsibility is to God. This is true because we are answerable to God. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). Let’s take a quick look at four ways we are responsible to God.

To know God. Paul wrote the Philippians, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil. 3:10). Daniel refers to those “that do know their God” (Dan. 11:32). Well did Ezekiel want the house of Israel to “know that I am the Lord their God” (Ezek. 39:22). Each of us must know God.

To fear God. To fear God is to respect Him. The wise man put it this way, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God...” (Eccl. 12:13). Peter’s sermon, at the house of Cornelius, began with these words, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). We need to know that “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him” (Ps. 147:11).

To keep His commandments. Involved in the whole duty of man is to “keep his commandments” (Eccl. 12:13). The blessed ones of the final book “are they that do his commandments” (Rev. 22:14).

To love God. The greatest motivation for

obedience to God is that of loving Him. We are taught to love God with our all (Mt. 22:37-38). John may have said it best, “For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3).

RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHERS. Too many are so self-centered that they only think of themselves. Each of us is responsible:

To teach others (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:16).

To love others (1 Jn. 4:7-11; Jn. 15:12).

To restore the fallen (Gal. 6:1).

To visit as we care for others (Mt. 25:41-46; Jas. 1:26-27).

To encourage others (Heb. 10:25; 3:13).

To practice hospitality toward others (1 Pet. 3:9; Heb. 13:1-2; Rom. 12:13).

To withdraw from those who walk disorderly (2 Th. 3:6).

RESPONSIBILITIES TO SELF. Last, but not least, each has responsibilities toward himself.

To take heed to (1 Tim. 4:16).

To examine (2 Cor. 13:5).

To teach (Rom. 2:21-22).

To exercise (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

To keep pure (1 Tim. 5:22).

To save (1 Tim. 4:16; Acts 2:40).

How well we meet these responsibilities to God, others, and self will determine our eternal destiny. Have you checked on yours lately? Remember the song, *Christ Receiveth Sinful Men*? We trust that this message has been made “clear and plain.” One man was said to be successful because he put God first, others second, and himself last! Each of us would do well to do the same.

TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Joe R. Price

Plainness of speech is a mark of the gospel and its teaching (Acts 20:20-21). Much confusion has resulted from the councils, creeds, confessions, and consciences of men concerning the church. Plain Bible teaching removes this confusion.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BELONGS TO CHRIST. Men have built many churches, all claiming to belong to Christ. In contrast to the many denominations of men, the New Testament church belongs to Jesus. The church belongs to Christ because: (a) *Christ built the church.* After Peter confessed belief that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” the Lord plainly said, “on this rock I will build My church” (Mt. 16:16-18). The church does not belong to us to do with as we see fit. (b) *Christ died for the church.* The church was purchased with the blood of the Son of God, shed as the redemptive price for the sins of the world (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:26-27; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). (c) *Christ is the head of His church.* No vicar, no president, no king or queen possesses authority in or over the church of Christ; His authority over the church is complete (Mt. 28:18-20; Col. 1:18; 3:17). (d) *Christ is the Savior of the church.* Salvation is only through Jesus Christ, and He only saves His body, the church (Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). The church of Christ belongs to Christ; the denominations belong to the men who built them and rule them.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS COMPOSED OF THOSE WHO ARE SAVED IN CHRIST. The church is not a club to join, a business to operate, or a social organization to administer a social agenda. “Church” translates the Greek word “ekklesia” meaning an assembly of called out ones. The gospel calls sinners out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light of God’s Son (1 Pet. 2:9-10). The church of Christ

is the assembly of the saved; God’s people on earth whose citizenship is in heaven (Heb. 12:22-23). The Bible plainly says that one cannot be saved without being added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). The church is composed of Christians, not churches. The church is not an assembly of churches; it is the assembly of the saved (Heb. 12:22-23).

THERE IS ONLY ONE CHURCH OF CHRIST. Jesus plainly said, “I will build My church”—not, “I will build My churches.” Considered universally, all the saved (all Christians) constitute one body, the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). Considered locally, Christians gather in different places to form independent congregations. Thus, we read of the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16; see also 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2; 1 Th. 1:1; Rev. 1:11). Each congregation has its own organization and is fully equipped to do its own work without the oversight or sponsorship of another church (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Eph. 4:11-16).

THE LORD ADDS YOU TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WHEN YOU ARE SAVED FROM YOUR SINS. The murderers of Jesus heard the gospel call and believed Jesus to be “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36-37). They were told to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). About 3,000 who did so were added together (Acts 2:40-41). The church began that day and the Christians continued to grow in faith and service to Christ (Acts 2:42). The church of Christ exists today. The Lord will add you to His church when you will believe, repent, and are baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:37-38, 47).

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT DEATH

David Eldridge

As we consider the cry to “tell us plainly,” we note the need for plain teaching about death. Almost every phobia that a man may be plagued with revolves around one thing—death. Most of the fear associated with death is due to a lack of understanding and preparation. However, the Bible has revealed much on the subject of death. Let us note some questions concerning death and the plain answers given in the Bible.

WE DO WE DIE? Some would answer this question by saying that the heart stops beating, the blood stops flowing, and the brain stops functioning. While this is true from a biological standpoint, this is not the root cause of why men die. In Eden, man was commanded, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve transgressed this commandment of God and were cast out of the garden. As a result, access to the tree of life was cut off and physical death was brought into the world (Gen. 3:22). Thus it is written that “in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22). We die physically because of the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

WHAT IS DEATH? The word “death” simply means separation. Physical death occurs when man’s life-giving spirit departs from his body (Jas. 2:26). At the creation, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). In death, “The dust will return to the earth as it was, and the Spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). This is according to the pronouncement of God to Adam: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). A man dies when his spirit departs his body.

WHO WILL DIE? Many try to escape or delay physical death. However, the reality is that “it is appointed for men to die” (Heb. 9:27). No matter how strong one may be, “No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war...” (Eccl. 8:8). The rule is that all will die. The only exception to this rule will be those who are alive when Christ returns (1 Th. 4:17).

IS DEATH THE END? The humanist teaches that death is the end of things. Jesus said, “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn. 5:28-29). When the Lord returns, all the dead will be resurrected. Then, the judgment will take place (Heb. 9:27). “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). At the judgment, men will either be granted eternal life and joy in Heaven or be sentenced to eternal death and torment in Hell (Mt. 25:31-46). Death is not the end—the body will be resurrected and a reckoning will take place.

CAN DEATH BE VIEWED POSITIVELY? The wise man said that “the day of death” is better “than the day of one’s birth” (Eccl. 7:1). This is only true for the one who has prepared for death by living for the Lord (Phil. 1:21). Death, for a faithful servant of the Lord, is viewed as a blessing because they will rest from their labors and enter into Heaven (Rev. 14:13; 22:14). Thus, the death of God’s people is precious in His sight (Ps. 116:15).

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TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Johnie Edwards

With all the speculation being taught concerning the second coming of Jesus, there is a great need for some plain, simple, and basic teaching on the subject. So, tell us plainly about:

THE FACT OF HIS COMING. He will come again. He said He would. He told the apostles, "... I will come again" (Jn. 14:3). Luke reported, "... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

THE TIME OF HIS COMING. There are just some things God has not revealed, and the time of the Lord's coming is one of them. Mark tells us as he wrote of this event, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mk. 13:32). Peter uttered that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..." (2 Pet. 3:10). Those who set the time of His coming are just not speaking plain Bible truths!

THE MANNER OF HIS COMING. He will not slip in without the knowledge of those living, as some tell us He did. His coming will be public in nature as "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7). He will come as He went away (Acts 1:11). His coming will be at an unexpected time (1 Th. 5:1-7; Mt. 24:36-39). Mankind will be carrying on the normal activities of the day; such as "eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage."

EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS COMING. Men have associated all kinds of things with His second coming. The Bible is plain as to what will take place when He comes:

All the dead will rise. John tells us that "all

that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth..." (Jn. 5:28-29).

The living will be changed. There will be folks living when Jesus comes. And since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50), those living at His appearance will be "changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). The "mortal" will take on "immortality," and the "corruptible must put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

The kingdom/church will be delivered up to God. The kingdom, which is the church (Mt. 16:18-19), has already been set up (Acts 2). At the end, or the second coming, Jesus will "deliver up the kingdom to God..." (1 Cor. 15:24). If you know the difference in the words "set up" and "deliver up," you will know the plain truth on this matter!

Christ's reign will end. The Bible plainly declares, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). And, that enemy is "death" (1 Cor. 15:26). At the resurrection, there will be no dead!

The final judgment. At His coming, "then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Mt. 16:27). Paul told the Romans, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). John was able to see "the dead, small and great, stand before God...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according their works" (Rev. 20:12).

The earth will be burned up. Peter plainly said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

We urge you to take the time to read the material in this special issue.

TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT THE JUDGMENT

Steve Monts

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF A GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY. The Judgment Day is that day. For some, it will be a great day—the best day they have ever known. For others, it will be a terrible day—the worst day they have ever known. And we know not when that day shall come. Jesus says, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt. 25:13). It will come when man is least expecting it, like a thief breaking into your house at night. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Pet. 3:10). Those who have prepared for that day will not be taken unaware. However, for the unprepared majority it will come too early and they will be lost eternally.

OUR BODIES WILL BE TRANSFORMED. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says there shall be a great sound when the Lord shall return and the faithful that are dead shall rise first to meet the Lord in the air. We who remain alive shall also meet the Lord in the air. The unfaithful shall see the Lord return with His holy angels in flaming fire taking vengeance (2 Th. 1:7-8). All shall be changed as our mortal bodies shall be transformed into immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-53). We will be given bodies that cannot die nor be destroyed. These bodies shall not be fleshly and imperfect, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50). They shall be perfect bodies with none of the current imperfections. We shall remember and feel and live forever (Lk. 16:24-25). The questions are, what shall we remember and feel? And, where shall we live forever?

THE REALM OF THE DEAD. The Hadean realm that contained all those that passed away shall give up its dead (Rev. 20:13). And all shall be judged by the books that God revealed (Rev. 20:12). The empty, no longer needed, Hadean realm will be the first to taste the fires of Hell and

there it shall be destroyed (Rev. 20:14). Then all those that were not found in the book of life shall be thrown into that fire (Rev. 20:15).

HOW WILL WE BE JUDGED? 2 Corinthians 5:10 says we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Judgment shall be swift and true. Those that have been under the Old Testament who lived by faith and obedience will have been pardoned from their sins by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 9:15). Those of us who have lived under the gospel shall be judged if we obeyed the plan of salvation. Those who heard the word (Rom. 10:17), believed in Christ (Jn. 8:24), repented of their sins (Lk. 13:3), confessed their faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), were baptized for forgiveness of their sins (Mk. 16:16), and then lived faithfully to the New Testament (2 Tim. 1:13, Rev. 2:10) shall be welcomed into Heaven (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

NO SECOND CHANCE. The parable of the ten virgins shows us that once the day comes there is no second chance (Mt. 25:1-13). In the parable, when the bridegroom returned, they that were ready entered the feast and the doors were shut and could not be reopened. The unprepared wanted them to be opened so that they could come into the feast (which represents heaven), but they could not be opened for anyone. Noah’s ark is an example of this judgment. Men had time, plenty of time, to come into the ark, but once the doors were shut by God they could not be opened again as judgment began and the rains came. Today, we enter the “ark” of Christ (His body, the church) and one day the door of entrance shall be shut. What side of that door shall we be on when that day shall come, on the inside or outside? Make ready.

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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

Tell Us Plainly

Answer questions with YES or NO.

1. Is God our Father? _____ (Galatians 1:3)
2. Will Jesus return to Earth? _____ (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
3. Does sin cause us to be separated from God? _____ (Isaiah 59:1-2)
4. Do we have miracles and spiritual gifts today? _____ (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
5. Must we be baptized to be saved? _____ (Mark 16:16)
6. Is Jesus the head of the church? _____ (Ephesians 1:22)
7. Are we responsible for our own actions? _____ (Romans 14:10-12)
8. Will we be judged by the word of God? _____ (John 12:48)
9. Will everyone go to Heaven? _____ (Matthew 7:14)
10. Is there a Hell? _____ (Matthew 10:28)
11. Is the Bible the word of God? _____ (2 Timothy 3:16)
12. Is death a separation of the body and spirit? _____ (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Answers

(1. yes 2. no 3. yes 4. no 5. yes 6. yes 7. yes 8. yes 9. no 10. yes 11. yes 12. yes)

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

TELL US PLAINLY ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

Justin Monts

HELL IS REAL. No one spoke more of hell than Jesus the loving Savior. He spoke of hell two to three times more than He did heaven. He knew the place was real and did not want souls to be lost there.

HELL IS ETERNAL HORROR. Jesus called it “everlasting fire” (Mt. 25:41), a place “where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). He repeated that three times. It is a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Lk. 13:28), “outer darkness” (Mt. 8:12), and “destruction” (Mt. 7:12).

PREACHING ON HELL IS NOT POPULAR. I have read of cases where preachers have been mugged at funerals because they preached on hell. One preacher was dragged into the parking lot and got a battered eye and a broken nose for preaching that a man who died drunk was lost. He also called on the surviving family to repent of their fornication (*The Decatur Daily, Loxley, AL, June 22, 2002*). The subject of hell has never been popular and some pretend it doesn't exist.

HEAVEN IS REAL. Jesus said, “Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:1-3).

HEAVEN IS ETERNAL HAPPINESS. Heaven is the opposite of hell. Instead of weeping and gnashing of teeth, there is nothing but joy. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Rev. 21:4). Instead of darkness, there shall be light. “And the

nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light” (Rev. 21:24). Instead of being surrounded by sinners, we will be encircled by saints! “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Rev. 7:9-10)!

WE END UP IN HEAVEN OR HELL. The choice is ours. There is no second chance after death. There is no intermediate place such as limbo or purgatory as the Catholics would teach. There is no such thing as reincarnation as the Hindus believe or annihilation of the soul as the Jehovah's Witnesses advocate. There is no progression to Godhood as the Mormons espouse. Let us speak plainly about heaven and hell. “It is appointed for men to die once and then the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). What will it be for you? Will you be carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom? Or will you lift up your eyes in torment (Lk. 16:22-23)? God sets before you life and death—therefore choose life that you may live (Dt. 30:19)! “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). “Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

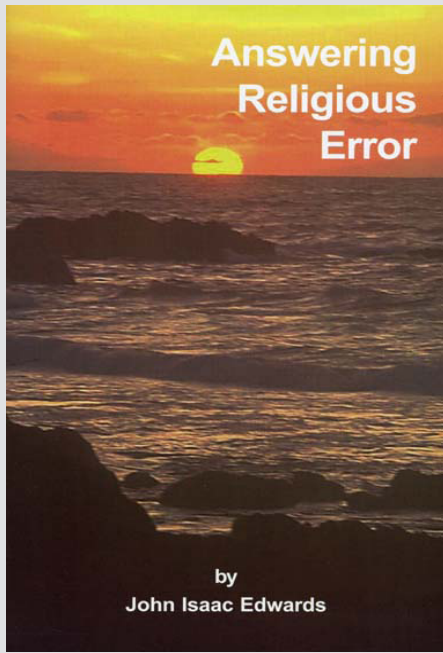
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