

Back To Basics

Volume 3

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Number 1

A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

SEEK YE FIRST

Johnie Edwards

The first order of business of every Christian is to, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..." (Mt. 6:33). Just what does this mean?

1) **SEEK.** To seek is to strive after as one covets earnestly after something. Jesus taught, "seek, and ye shall find" (Mt. 7:7). Many have just not learned that the kingdom must be sought after.

2) **YE.** Seek ye means for me to seek as the Lord has said. We often read passages addressed to us and think the Lord is talking to somebody else. The Bible speaks to you and to me. And, we need to get to listening!

3) **FIRST.** To seek first the kingdom is to seek it before anything else; being opposite to the last. How few put the kingdom before everything else! Can you imagine how much the kingdom would grow and how strong it would be, if we all put it first in our lives?

4) **THE KINGDOM.** The kingdom and the church are often used to refer to one and the same thing. When Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18), He had reference also to the "kingdom" (Mt. 16:19). We must learn to "seek ye first the kingdom" (Mt.

6:33). The church of the Lord must have first place in my life. I must do all of my planning and work around the church, with everything else coming after it!

5) **HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.** His righteousness encompasses His commandments. Remember the Psalmist saying, "for all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172)? This explains why Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...For therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. 1:16-17). This caused Peter to tell Cornelius, "he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

6) **THINGS ADDED.** The Lord told the kingdom/righteousness seeker, "and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). "These things added" are material things such as food, drink, and clothing (Mt. 6:25, 31). Instead of being anxious about, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Mt. 6:31), we just need to concern ourselves with seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is as the Psalmist said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25).



THE SOWER'S SEED

Basic Sermon Starters

"HE THAT GOETH FORTH AND WEEPETH, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, SHALL DOUBTLESS COME AGAIN WITH REJOICING, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM."

GREAT THINGS IN THE BOOK OF JONAH

Introduction

1. Sometimes the little books are overlooked in our study.
2. The little book of Jonah has some great things in it. Let's notice some.

Discussion

I. GREAT CALL

- A. Jonah 1:1-2
- B. Jonah was called to go preach to the people of Ninevah (Jonah 3:4).
- C. We are called by the gospel to go preach (2 Th. 2:14; Mk. 16:15-16).

II. GREAT CITY

- A. Ninevah (Jonah 1:2; 3:2-3; 4:11).
- B. Capital city of the great Assyrian empire. Population estimated at 1,000,000.
- C. A wicked city (Jonah 1:2).

III. GREAT FLIGHT

- A. Jonah (*dove*) rose up to flee (Jonah 1:3), in the opposite direction.

- B. It is impossible to flee from the Lord's presence (Ps. 139:7-12)!

IV. GREAT WIND AND GREAT FISH

- A. Lord sent a great wind (Jonah 1:4).
- B. Lord sent a great fish to swallow up Jonah (Jonah 1:17). The New Testament calls it a whale (Mt. 12:40).
- C. This looked forward to the burial of Christ in the earth (Mt. 12:40).

V. GREAT REPENTANCE

- A. Nineveh repented (Jonah 3:4-9; Mt. 12:41).
- B. God spared the city (Jonah 3:10).
- C. We are to repent (Acts 17:30).

VI. GREAT KINDNESS

- A. God is of great kindness (Jonah 4:2).
- B. God was very kind in saving these people and His kindness has been shown toward us through Christ (Eph. 2:7).

Conclusion

1. Some great things for learning (Rom. 15:4).
2. Salvation is of the Lord!

Back To Basics

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DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF RELIGION

John Isaac Edwards

The boss says it is mandatory that I work Sunday. The Bible says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...” (Mt. 6:33) and “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...” (Heb. 10:25). Yet, I am commanded to work and provide for my own (Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8). If I do not work I may lose my job, but I’m afraid that if I choose to work instead of assembling with the saints the Lord will be displeased. What am I to do?

No Christian should have to choose between working with his hands and assembling with the saints, when there is federal regulation to accommodate religious observances of employees.

1) **DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE.** According to Code of Federal Regulations, Title 29, Volume 4, it is “an unlawful employment practice for an employer to fail to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee, unless the employer demonstrates that accommodation would result in undue hardship on the conduct of its business... The duty to accommodate pertains to prospective employees as well as current employees. Consequently, an employer may not permit an applicant’s need for a religious accommodation to affect in any way its decision whether to hire the applicant...”

2) **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION.** “...the employer or labor organization must offer the alternative which least disadvantages the individual with respect to his or her employment opportunities...The following are some means of accommodating the conflict between work schedules and religious practices which the Com-

mission believes that employers and labor organizations should consider as part of the obligation to accommodate: flexible arrival and departure times; floating or optional holidays; flexible work breaks; use of lunch time in exchange for early departure; staggered work hours; permitting an employee to make up time lost due to the observance of religious practices.” For more information or to file a charge, visit www.eeoc.gov.

Really, it all boils down to where is my faith (Lk. 8:25), what is most important in life, and what do I really want to do?

Seek Ye First Johnie Edwards.....	1
The Sower’s Seed Great Things In The Book Of Jonah.....	2
Discrimination Because Of Religion John Isaac Edwards.....	3
A Mother’s Instruction To Her Son Melba Edwards.....	4
Idle Words Charles Carpenter.....	5
Letter From A Wayward Brother - Now Deceased David McPherson.....	6
Letter From A Restored Brother - Now Deceased David McPherson.....	7
Peter’s Sermon At Solomon’s Porch Tom O’Neal.....	8
Browsing Through God’s Library Joe Corley.....	9
Kid’s Activity Page Paul Adams.....	10
Mary In A Grilled Cheese Sandwich Craig V. Thomas.....	11

A MOTHER'S INSTRUCTION TO HER SON

Melba Edwards

We live during an era when mothers are away from their children much of the time. Those who have reared children realize how short those eighteen years are. Mothers have a tremendous influence upon their sons. We also have grave responsibilities that are God-given, and it is up to me to instill them in my son.

1) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON IN THE SCRIPTURES.** I'm reminded of the example Timothy had from his grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5). They had an unfeigned faith: one that was undisguised. It was a pure, genuine faith. Our sons need to see in us a strong faith in God and be taught to put their faith in Him also.

2) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON TO OBEY HIS PARENTS.** The Bible speaks firmly in Ephesians 6:1-3 when Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother..." Children must be taught from birth that their parents are to be obeyed and there are rules to abide by.

3) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON TO WORK.** "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10). We need to instruct our sons, at a young age, to work. Our sons need responsibilities to help prepare them for even greater responsibilities that will come their way soon enough.

4) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.** We cannot think for one minute they will somehow know,

or that just because we brought them to Bible study and worship they will automatically become a Christian. They must be taught the plan of salvation at home.

5) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON HOW TO REMAIN FAITHFUL.** He should live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Ti. 2:12). Our sons must also be instructed, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

6) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON TO KEEP HIMSELF PURE.** Paul said to Timothy, "keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). Sons must keep themselves pure in the things they touch, smell, see, hear, and taste. They must be taught to abstain from cigarettes, drinking, drugs, filthy speech, and unlawful sexual behavior. They need to know the places they can and cannot go.

7) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON TO CHOOSE A GOOD WIFE AND HOW TO BE A GOOD HUSBAND.** Sons must be taught to "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Gen. 2:24). He is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). He must love his wife (Eph. 5:25), provide for her (1 Tim. 5:8), and honor her (1 Pet. 3:7).

8) **I MUST INSTRUCT MY SON TO BE A GOOD FATHER.** Fathers instruct (Prov. 1:8), correct (Prov. 29:17), do not provoke their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Fathers realize their children are an heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3).

IDLE WORDS

Charles Carpenter

“**B**ut I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Mt. 12:36).

1) **INTRODUCTION.** From the time of the giving of the law under Moses to the closing of the New Testament under the Christian dispensation, mankind has continued to violate the commands of God that pertain to swearing. The third command stated, “Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7). Jesus said, “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thy oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mt. 5:33-37). Jesus said at the conclusion of the passage in Matthew 12:34-37, “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” John wrote to the church in Thyatira, “...and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reigns and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Rev. 2:23).

2) **DEFINITIONS.** *Curse:* to swear at; to blaspheme; to invoke evil or call down destruction upon; to wish evil against a person or thing. *Swear:* to use profane or blasphemous language; to mention sacred beings or things in an irreverent manner; to affirm or deny by an oath. *Profanity:* blasphemy; cursing; irreverence in spirit or conduct.

3) **MODERN USAGE.** Over the centuries, much of mankind has been cautious as to the use of out-and-out profanity. Some feared they might be stricken dead in their tracks for not heeding the Biblical commands. Others who needed expressive words as fillers were too decent to stoop to profanity. As a result, there grew in many languages a vocabulary of minced, mild and concealed oaths. These disguised oaths have become a part of every day language, but few persons are aware of their real meanings. Several years ago, Dr. Carey McCord researched the meaning of several oaths used around the world. Here are a few of the common oaths and their real meanings: Aw shoot (*O shit*); Cripes (*Christ*); Dad burn (*God damn*); Dang it (*Damn it*); Durn (*Damn*); Doggone (*God rot them*); Drat (*God rot them*); Egad (*God*); Gad (*God*); Gee (*Jesus*); Gee whillikins (*Jesus Christ*); Gee whiz (*Jesus Christ*); Golly (*God*); Gosh (*God*); Heck (*Hell*); Holy cow (*Holy Christ*); Holy mackerel (*Holy flesh*); Holy smoke (*Holy Spirit*); Jimminy Crickets (*Jesus Christ*); Lordy (*Lord*).

4) **CONCLUSION.** We ought to be impressed when we recognize that such expressions are merely disguised profanity. Older and younger alike think it is a mark of strength to punctuate their speech with these “second-cousin cuss-words.” It rather reflects upon the condition of one’s heart, the lack of spiritual growth, or the ability to discern between good and evil. James admonishes, “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (Jas. 3:9-10).

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LETTER FROM A WAYWARD BROTHER - NOW DECEASED

Written by David McPherson

To the church of Christ at _____,

Thank you for attending my funeral and reaching out to my family in their time of grief. The love you continue to show them is greatly appreciated. I only wish you had loved me while I was still with you. You see, that place of torments that we use to talk about in Bible class (when I attended) is real. I am here now with the rich man of Luke 16 and countless others who died in their sins.

While I am tormented in this flame there are a few questions that are “burning” in my mind. How come you lacked concern for my condition and didn’t try to restore me in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1)? Why did you not care enough for my soul to admonish me as a brother (2 Th. 3:15)? What is the reason you never delivered me unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that my spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5)? How come you didn’t love me enough to withdraw from me as I continually walked disorderly (2 Th. 3:6)?

While I bear the guilt of my sin, I can’t help but think that the Lord holds you partly responsible. I wonder, will my blood not be required at thine hands (Ezek. 3:18)? Although you have disappointed me, my sincere desire is that you avoid this place of torments! But unless you repent and develop the proper attitude toward unfaithful brethren I fear we will be together again.

In much suffering and agonizing in torments, I now await the everlasting punishment of hell. My destination is set. There is no turning back now for me. But what about you? Will you heed the warning? Will you repent?

In sin, sadness and sincerity,
Your wayward brother - now deceased

4399 Tattersall DR, Plainfield, IN 46168

LETTER FROM A RESTORED BROTHER - NOW DECEASED

Written by David McPherson

To the church of Christ at _____,

Thank you for attending my funeral and reaching out to my family in their time of grief. The love you continue to show them is greatly appreciated and reminds me of the unfeigned love you confirmed to me back when I became unfaithful. You see, that place of paradise we use to talk about in Bible class is real. I am here now in Abraham's bosom with Lazarus and all the faithful who have passed on.

While I am comforted in this hadean realm, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your demonstrations of concern for my soul. Thank you for caring enough during my unfaithful stint to restore me in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1). Words cannot adequately express my gratitude for your diligence in admonishing me as a brother (2 Th. 3:15). Thank you for actually loving me enough to practice "tough-love." Had you not delivered me unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, my spirit would most likely have not been saved (1 Cor. 5:5). While some brethren just don't get it, I thank you for your obedience to the Lord's commandment to withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly (2 Th. 3:6). Your unwillingness to carry on in social activities with me, made me ashamed of my sin (2 Th. 3:14).

While I reflect upon my repentance and restoration, I can't help but think that the Lord considers you partly responsible. Because you took a stand for truth I am now at peace, separated by a great gulf from those in torment. In my sincere love for you, I desire that you come to this place of paradise. If your attitude toward unfaithful brethren is indicative of your attitude toward the whole counsel of God, I trust we will be together again.

In much comfort and peace in Abraham's bosom, I now look forward to everlasting life in heaven. My destination is set. Thanks to you, I turned my life around in time. Will you keep the faith? Will you continue to be faithful to the end? Please do.

In joy, peace and comfort,
Your restored brother - now deceased

4399 Tattersall DR, Plainfield, IN 46168

PETER'S SERMON AT SOLOMON'S PORCH

by Tom O'Neal

Peter and John were going to the temple at the ninth hour of prayer (Acts 3:1) when they encountered a lame man (vv. 2-3). They did not give him the alms he sought, but rather healed him (vv. 4-8). This caused much excitement among the people (vv. 9-11).

1) **APOSTLES DISCLAIM CREDIT.** The apostles ask the people why they looked upon them as the ones who healed this man through their own power (v. 12).

2) **JESUS IS PREACHED.** The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob glorified His son Jesus Christ (v. 13). The people had delivered Jesus to be crucified at the time that Pilate found no fault in Him and determined to release Him (v. 13). Instead, the people wanted a murderer released unto them, denying the Holy and Just Jesus (v. 14). The people, the apostles said, delivered up Jesus (v. 13), denied Him (v. 14), desired a murderer (v. 14), and killed the Prince of life (v. 15). But God raised Jesus from the dead (v. 15). The apostles were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (v. 15). The apostles charge the people and the rulers with killing Jesus through ignorance (v. 17; 1 Cor. 2:8). All of this was done that prophecy might be fulfilled (v. 18).

3) **SALVATION IS PROMISED.** The apostles told the believing audience (vv. 9-10) to repent and be converted (v. 19). The American Standard Version renders "be converted" as "turn again." Repent and be converted, in verse 19, is the same as repent and be baptized in Acts 2:38.

"The times of refreshing," in verse 19, parallels the reception of "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38.

4) **SALVATION PROMISED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.** Peter quotes Moses (Dt. 18:15-18) as telling of Jesus Christ. Those who do not hear Jesus Christ will be lost (v. 23). All the prophets foretold of the days of salvation (v. 24). In Peter's audience, were the children of the prophets and the ones to whom the gospel was first preached (vv. 25-26). They were the children of the covenant that God made with Abraham (v. 25; Gen. 12:1-3). The covenant God made with Abraham was threefold in nature.

God promised to give Abraham and his seed a **land** (Gen. 12:1). God fulfilled this promise in giving them the land of promise or Caanan (Gen. 15:18; Josh. 11:23; 21:43-45; 23:13-16; 1 Ki. 4:21, 25; 8:56; Neh. 9:7-8, 23-24).

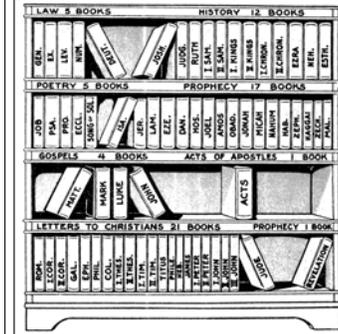
God promised Abraham that He would make of his seed a great **nation** (Gen. 12:1). God fulfilled that promise (Gen. 46:3; Ex. 19:6; Dt. 26:5).

God promised Abraham that "in thy **seed** shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; v. 25). Peter, by the Holy Spirit, said God fulfilled this promise by sending Jesus Christ "to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (v. 26). The blessing of Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus Christ to bring salvation to all mankind. First, to the Jews (v. 26). Then, to the Gentiles (Eph. 2:13; 4:17), the "afar off" of Acts 2:39.

All men who reject Christ, reject being a part of those who will be blessed in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham; they reject their only hope of salvation (Acts 4:11-12).

PO Box 271407, Tampa FL 33688

BROWSING THROUGH GOD'S LIBRARY



by
Joe Corley

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As we browsed through the Old Testament section of God's library in previous articles, we noted that although there were a few spots that glowed brighter than others, for the most part the light in that section was dim. God did not give much information regarding His plan for man back then. There were certain promises and prophecies and shadowy images of things to come, but still God's plan remained a "mystery" (Eph. 3:3-6). Even the angels desired to know more than was revealed (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Now we enter that section of God's library called the **New Testament**, and find it brightly illuminated by the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ." That which had been a mystery before is now fully revealed. Salvation has been brought down to man. The promises and prophecies spoken long before have now become a reality. The Christ has come! More than 400 years had passed since the last Old Testament prophet laid down his inspired pen. But God had not forgotten His promise.

As we browse through this glorious part of God's library, we see five rooms that contain a total of 27 books. These rooms are labeled Biography, History, Special Letters, General Letters, and Prophecy. In this article, we shall enter the section labeled **Biography**.

The four books in this section (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*) give an account of the life of Jesus, the Christ. They are named after their authors. These writers, guided by the Holy Spirit in their testimony (2 Pet. 1:21), provide a convincing and powerful testimony to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God.

Matthew, a tax collector, who became one of the apostles, emphasizes the fact that Jesus is the *Messiah* foretold by the Old Testament prophets. He calls attention to numerous ways in which Jesus fulfilled prophesy. There are about 55 quotations from the Old Testament in this book. He seems to have written in a way to especially appeal to Jewish readers. The book of Matthew is said to be "the most widely read book in all the world." **Mark**, a later disciple, emphasizes the *miracles* of Jesus. His is a shorter book. He omits the birth and childhood of Jesus and starts his testimony when Jesus was 30 years of age at the beginning of His personal ministry. **Luke**, the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), though not an apostle, was a close companion of the apostle Paul, and often traveled with him on his evangelistic journeys. He wrote from the standpoint of an historian, giving careful attention to dates and places. His writings were written more to appeal to Gentile readers. He emphasized the *humanity* of Jesus in his book. **John**, a Galilean fisherman, also an apostle, emphasizes the *deity* of Jesus by presenting many evidences to this end.

All four of these biographical books focus more on the last week of Christ's life than any other part. The last week occupies one third of the book of Matthew, one third of Mark, one quarter of Luke, and one half of John. It was during these last few days when the most important events in human history occurred - the trials, crucifixion and resurrection of the Savior, which was the culmination of God's redemptive plan, and, in fact, the climax of the whole Bible.

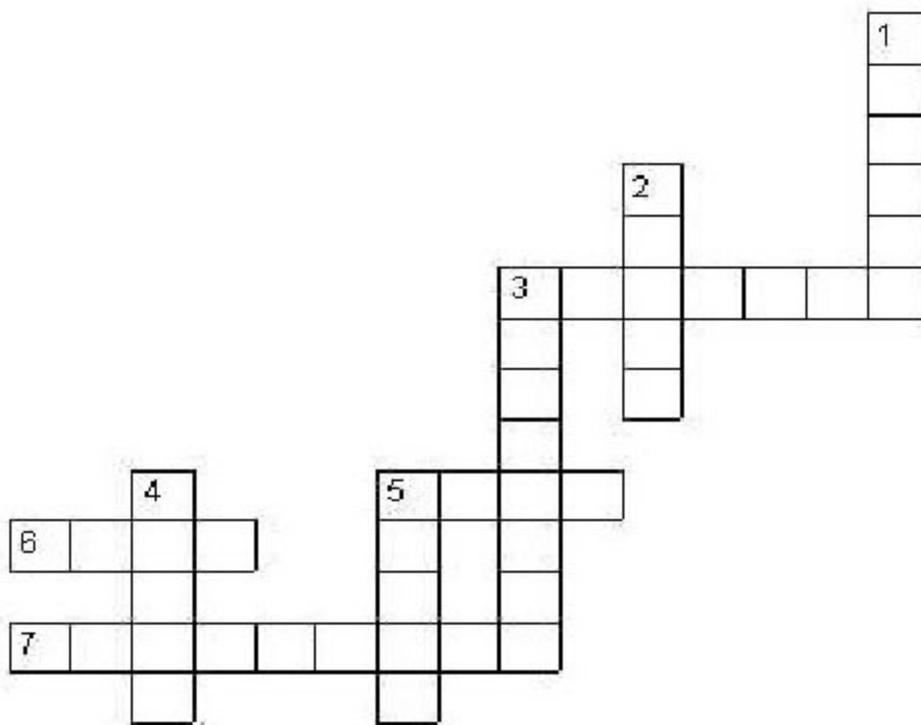
Kids Activity Page

Paul Adams

Memory Verse: "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles" (Luke 6:13).

Jesus Called Them

Use the clues below to find some who were called to be apostles. Read Matthew 10:1-4; Acts 1:15-26; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9.



Down:

1. Simon's brother.
2. Also called Simon.
3. Replaced Judas.
4. Betrayed Jesus.
5. 5 letter son of Zebedee.

Across:

3. Was a Publican.
5. 4 letter son of Zebedee.
6. Chosen out of due time.
7. Also known as Lebbaeus.

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

MARY IN A GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH

Craig V. Thomas

Recently CNN reported a woman in Florida was offered \$22,000 for a 10-year-old grilled cheese sandwich supposedly bearing the image of the “Virgin Mary.” Actually, it looked much more like Greta Garbo to me. It is truly sad how far some have taken their religious superstitions. Stark contrasts exist between the Bible’s view of Jesus’ mother and those of some denominationalists. We offer the Bible’s view in the same spirit Paul did in teaching the Athenians (Acts 17:22-31). The Bible teaches...

1) **MARY HAD A NORMAL BIRTH.** The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.) states, “Mary was, from the first moment of her conception...preserved immune from all stain of original sin” (491). Carefully compare this to what the Bible says: “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezek. 18:20, please read entire chapter). Mary was born “sinless,” not because of an “Immaculate Conception.” She was born sinless, because all men are born sinless! Sin is not inherited like blue eyes and blond hair. We sin when we choose to transgress God’s law (1 Jn. 3:4; Rom. 6:16). Sin is the awful choice we make in following our own desires (Jas. 1:12-16). Unfortunately, all except Jesus (Jn. 5:30; Heb. 4:15), have made this tragic choice, for “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23).

2) **MARY GAVE BIRTH TO OTHER CHILDREN.** Again, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says Mary, “remained...always a virgin” (510). But, the

Bible tells us Jesus had brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:55-56; 1 Cor. 9:5). The Catechism attributes Jesus’ siblings to the “other Mary” (Mt. 27:61; 28:1), despite Matthew plainly identifying them with Joseph and Mary. Is there shame in the normal sexual relations of marriage which God approves? No! “Marriage is honorable among all and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:5). The notion that one must remain a virgin or celibate to remain pure, when God gives men and women the right to marry, is a man-made doctrine; a departure from God’s word (1 Tim. 4:1-3). In this passage, the apostle Paul identifies forced celibacy as belonging to “the doctrines of demons.”

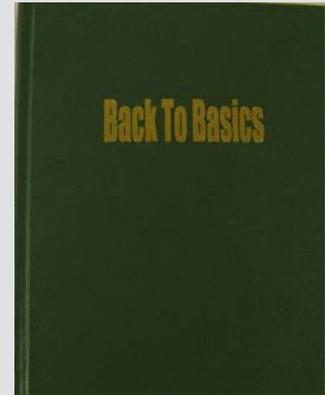
3) **MARY IS NOT TO BE PRAYED TO.** The Catechism says, “ask the Mother of God to intercede for us at the hour of our death in the Hail Mary” (1014). Friends, this is serious. Paul said, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Placing faith in Mary is placing faith in human tradition; in another gospel! For, the Bible says, “there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Judge for yourself, does not teaching Mary “intercedes for us” contradict that inspired statement? Do we need a reminder that changing God’s word is a sin? (Dt. 4:2; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

We take no pleasure in exposing doctrines so many hold dear, but such teachings are condemned by the Bible.

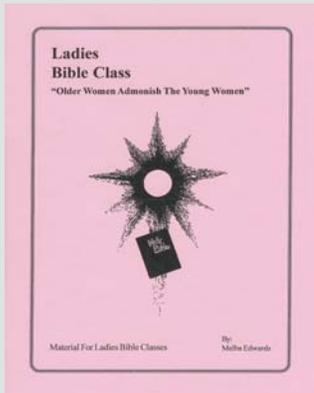
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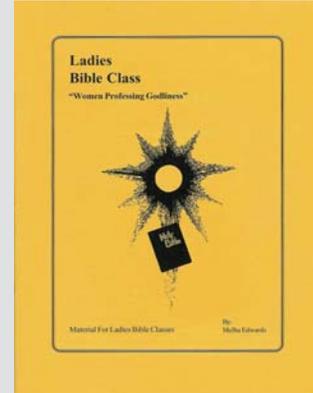
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