







A  
GLIMPSE  
OF  
GLORY



SERMONS AND WRITINGS BY

RONNY F. WADE



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First Printing

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## FORWARD

Every faithful gospel preacher fills a needed place in the kingdom of the Lord. However, occasionally a man demonstrates such talent for communicating the gospel, defending the truth, and leading the church through difficult times that he wields a mighty influence that will be felt for generations. Bro. Ronny F. Wade has served the Churches of Christ for more than a half-century as a rock of wisdom, Bible scholarship, and leadership. It would be a great loss if many of the sermons so eloquently presented from pulpits across the land were not preserved in such a volume as this one. Whether in sermon, public debate, or imparting private counsel, I have always been impressed by Bro. Wade's remarkable ability to make the simple seem profound and the profound seem so simple. He is always prepared with a "word fitly spoken". His preaching has touched our hearts, refreshed our spirits, and renewed our minds. This volume contains a representation of nearly 60 years worth of labor in the Kingdom of God. Through countless gospel meetings, dozens of public debates, or the thousands of sermons preached over television and radio, only eternity will reveal the good that the Lord has accomplished through this man. May each of these sermons stir up many happy memories but most of all, may they point us to Christ, the Lamb of Calvary.

*Kevin W. Presley*



Ronny and Alfreda Wade  
50th Wedding Anniversary

## **The Life of Ronny F. Wade**

*by Clint DeFrance*

Ronny Foy Wade was born at the home of his parents, Foy E. Wade and Inez Wade, 616 W. Heard St., Cleburne, Texas, at 9 a.m. in the morning of April 4, 1936. Ronny entered this world during the latter days of the Great Depression, but was raised in a blessed environment. His father worked as a meat cutter in a local grocery store and his mother was a full time homemaker. When he was three years old, his sister, Janis Gail, was born.

The family resided in Cleburne, Texas, for the first five years of Ronny's life, and it was in this town, at the old Walnut Street congregation, that Ronny first attended church services when he was only an infant. In his youngest days, Ronny would have been exposed to some of the finest gospel preaching in recent American history.

Under the influence of faithful preachers, the congregation in Cleburne made the transition from using alcoholic wine in the Lord's Supper to using fruit of the vine, in accordance with the Bible pattern. It was in this kind of atmosphere that Ronny was raised to love and cherish the teachings of God's Word, and to take living by them very seriously.

In 1941, the Wade family moved to Ft. Worth, Texas, where Ronny's

father had secured work as a meat cutter in a local grocery store. 1119 E. Tucker became the family's home for the next seven years. These were formative years for Ronny Wade. He learned a strong work ethic and a love for family from the example of his godly parents.

During the dark days of World War II, Foy Wade went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad as a fireman. Inez worked in a garment factory in Ft. Worth and Jan and Ronny were cared for, in their parents' absence, by an aunt who lived with them.

In Ft. Worth, the family attended church at the old Vaughn Blvd. congregation. They had no car and on Sunday mornings, they would ride the city bus across town and then walk several blocks to the building.

The Wade house was always open to preachers. When they came to town to hold meetings, Brother and Sister Wade always had them over for a meal or to spend the night. Such visits had a great impact on Ronny and played a great part in his decision to become a preacher.

By his own, constant admission, Ronny Wade is the man, the Christian, and the preacher he is due in great part to his mother and father. His mother especially played an important role in developing within him an appreciation and respect for religion and the church.

He was also greatly influenced by the leaders of his home congregation and a number of gospel preachers who often passed through, such as Barney Welch, Fred Kirbo, Homer A. Gay, Homer L. King, James R. Stewart, and Clovis T. Cook.

During an area Labor Day Meeting, Brother H.E. Robertson baptized Ronny Wade into Christ on September 3, 1949, in a little creek located in Cobb Park, Ft. Worth, Texas. Around a year after his baptism, Ronny gave his first talk, on Wednesday night, at the Vaughn Blvd.

congregation. For the next year or so, he took his turn in the teaching schedule there. When he was fourteen, he started teaching periodically at nearby churches, such as Dallas, DeLeon, Crossroads near Glen Rose, Northside in Ft. Worth, and various other places.

## **AS A PREACHER**

In 1951, Ronny attended the annual Fourth of July meeting at Sulphur, Okla. The young boys were given an opportunity to speak on Sunday afternoon in the high school auditorium. His sermon title was, "Flee, Follow, Fight." After the service, Brother Homer A. Gay asked Ronny to travel with him the rest of the summer. He accepted the invitation and from that point, his preaching career began. Ronny continues to express the deepest appreciation and indebtedness to Brother Gay for the confidence he had in him as a young boy, and for his patience and long-suffering attitude in bearing with Ronny during the formative years of his ministry.

Many who heard him as a boy report that he was as talented in the pulpit at age 15 as today! He quickly took his place among a large number of young men dedicated to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of those boys remained lifelong friends as they grew to adulthood.

Through the years, Ronny preached and participated in efforts with many other gospel preachers. His first gospel meeting was at the Crossroads congregation near Glen Rose, Texas, in 1952, May 30 – June 8, alongside Brother Benny Cryer. From that time, he has continued to be a prolific speaker, having held over 700 meetings and a number of debates on several doctrinal subjects. He continues to hold 15-20 meetings per year.

In addition to holding gospel meetings, Ronny has served congregations in local work. From 1958-1960, Ronny worked with the



newly established work in Arlington, Texas. In 1962, he and his family moved to Lebanon, Missouri, and labored with the congregation until 1966. It was during this work that Ronny began his career preaching over the television. The history of the television work will be discussed in a later portion of this book. The Wades moved to Springfield, Missouri, in 1966 and served and worshiped with the congregation there until 2008, when they moved to LaGrange, Georgia. After working in that area three years, Ronny and his wife moved back to Springfield, Missouri, where they now reside.

### **AS A HUSBAND, FATHER AND GRANDFATHER**

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In June 1955, Ronny married Miss Alfreda McKeand of Huntington, West Virginia. She has been his constant and loving companion for the past sixty years. By his admission, he owes largely to her his success in life and work. She has been an exemplary preacher's wife. She kept the house and cared for their children while Ronny was away in meetings and debates. After the children were grown, she commenced traveling with Ronny, and for the past twenty-five years has been with him on almost every meeting he has held.

The home of Ronny and Alfreda was blessed with three children: Jeffery Kent Wade, Kathy Deanne Wade, and Karen Denise Wade Smith and her husband Bill, who serves as an elder of the Lord's Church in Columbia, Missouri. Karen and Bill have given the Wades three grandchildren: Taylor Smith, Hunter Smith, and Haley Smith.

### **AS AN EDUCATOR**

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In his boyhood, Ronny Wade was educated in the public schools of Ft. Worth, Texas, graduating from Polytechnic High School in 1954. He attended Texas Wesleyan College and Texas Christian University graduating in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. He later obtained a Masters Degree in Guidance and

Counseling from University of Missouri, a Specialist in Education from Missouri State University and a Doctorate in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri in 1983.

Ronny taught in the public schools of Ft. Worth, Texas, one year and served the Public Schools of Springfield, Missouri, for twenty-five years as a teacher, counselor, and administrator. He retired in 1994 to devote full-time to gospel preaching.

## AS A WRITER

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For a number of years, Brother Homer A. Gay wrote a piece in the *Old Paths Advocate* each month titled “Timely Suggestions.” Upon his death in 1958, Brother Homer King asked Ronny to write a monthly piece to take the place of the one written by Brother Gay. He called his column “Think It Over,” and for some time continued to write under that heading. Sometime later, at the request of Brother King, he was added as an editor of the paper and still later as assistant publisher with Don King. He has been writing “The Querist Column” since 1987.

In the mid-1980’s, Ronny started a publishing company, “Yesterday’s Treasures.”

Through this venture, he has written and published a number of books including: *A Good Soldier: Life and writings of Homer A. Gay*, *The Sun Will Shine Again Someday: A history of the one cup/non-class churches of Christ* (reprinted twice), *Pulpit Treasures: A book of Sermon Outlines by various preachers*, and *Footprints On The Sands of Time: A biographical history of several preachers and their work among one cup/non-class churches*.

Ronny has also written a number of tracts, including: *Twelve Reasons Why You Should Investigate The Church of Christ*. This is a collection of sermons preached over the T.V. program *Let The Bible Speak*. Over

fifty thousand copies have been printed and distributed nationwide and in several foreign countries. This work has been translated into several African tribal dialects. Other works include: *Fundamentals*, *Does It Make Any Difference*, and *This Do In Remembrance of Me*. Ronny holds the copyright to *The Cup of The Lord* and *The Voice of One Crying In The Wilderness* by J.D. Phillips.



The house where Ronny was born



Ethel Minnie (Payne) and  
"Frank" Wade



Foy, Inez Wade with my  
paternal grandparents Frank  
and Ethyl Wade



My maternal grandmother  
and my mother's oldest sister



Ronny at 3 months old



Ronny sitting on great-grandmother Doggett's  
lap, mother Inez, and grandmother Viola  
(standing) and great-grandfather (seated)



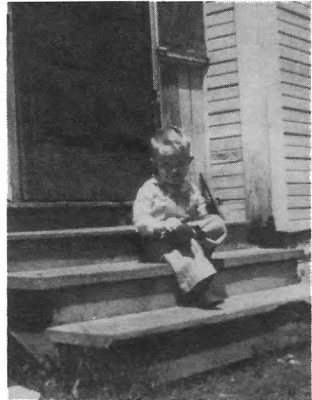
Ronny at 6 months old



Ronny at 1 years old



Ronny at 5 years old



Ronny contemplating  
what to preach that night



Alfreda, her mom, her dad and sisters



Alfreda, about the time  
we married



Alfreda's family



Ronny, Alfreda, and  
Lynwood Smith June 7,  
1955, at our wedding



Our Wedding Party



Ronny, Jan and Foy and Inez at  
Huntington, WV, when Alfreda and I married



Ronny and Alfreda just after the wedding



Ronny and Alfreda in La Grange, GA



Our girls at 3 months



Our young family 1961



Kathy, Jeff and Karen



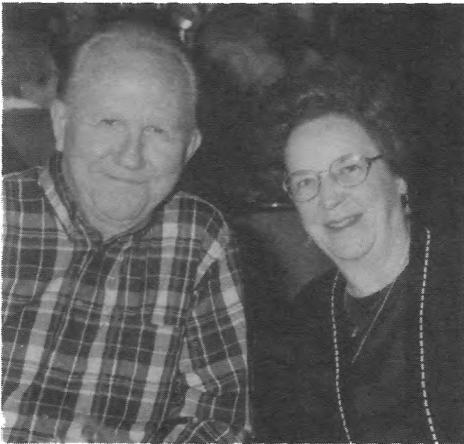
Karen and Kathy



Karen, Alfreda, Ronny and Jeff



My grandchildren



Ronny and Alfreda



50th Wedding Anniversary





Ronny, Alfreda, LeAnne, Clint



Ronny



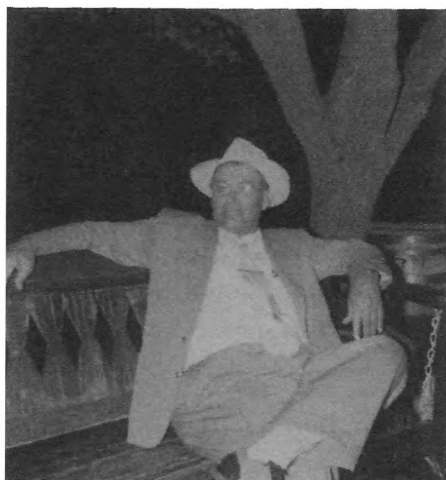
Foy, Inez and family at their  
60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary



Susie Gay



Ervin Waters and Paul Nichols



Homer L. King



Doug and Edith Phillips

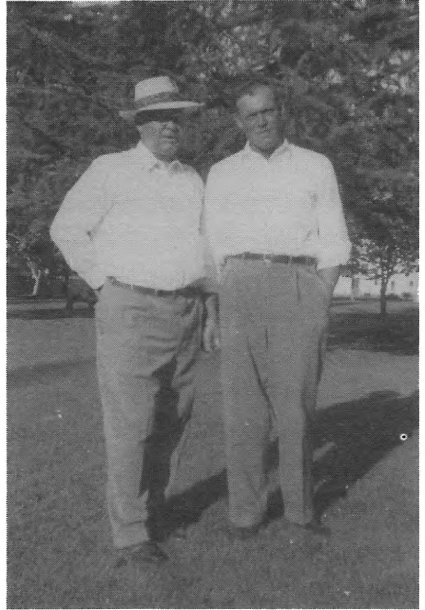


Preachers at Sulphur, Oklahoma

*A Glimpse of Glory*



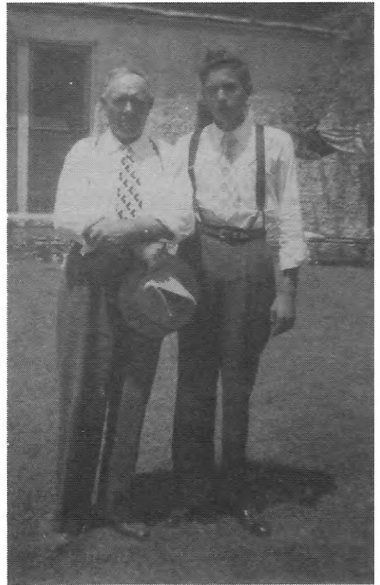
Fred Kirbo and Barney Welch



Homer King and Coy Agnew



Brother and Sister James R. Stewart



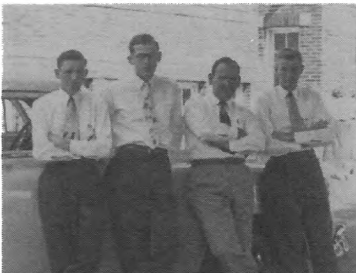
Bennie Cryer and his dad



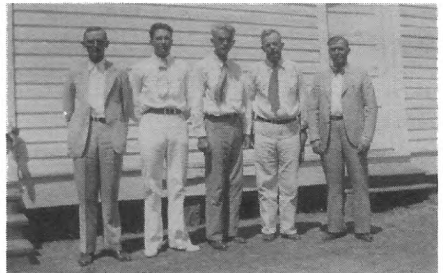
The Vaughn Blvd. Church Building



L-R: Wayne DeGough, Gerald Rowland, Howard King, Tommy

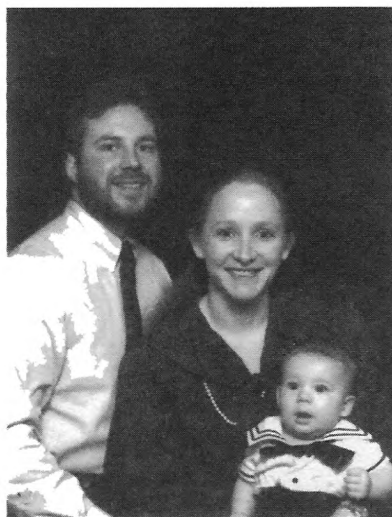


Johnny Elmore, Tommy Shaw,  
Lynwood Smith, Billy Orten



L-R: T.E. McBride, Clovis Cook, H.C.  
Welch Sr., I. G. Hayes, H.L. King

*A Glimpse of Glory*



Bill, Karen and Taylor



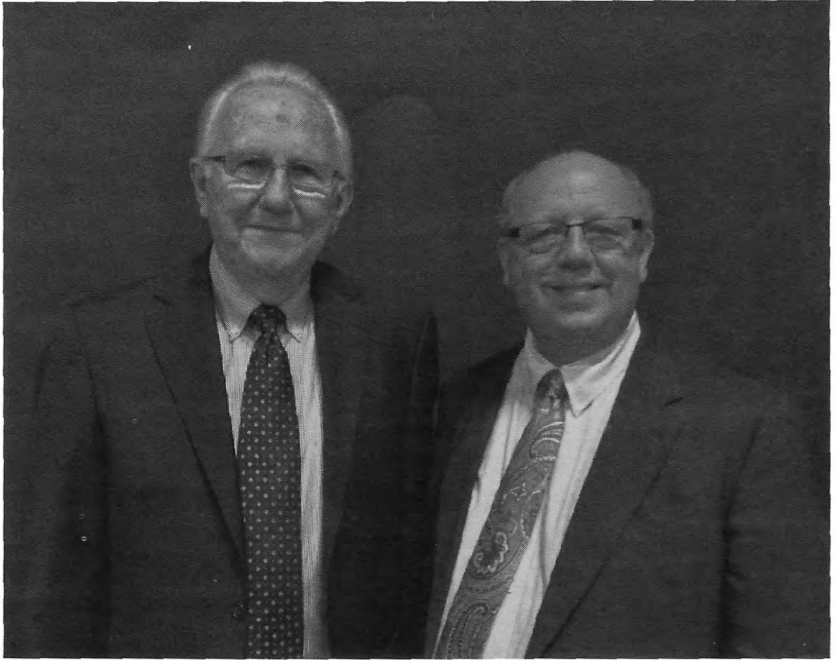
Carl Johnson and Ronny



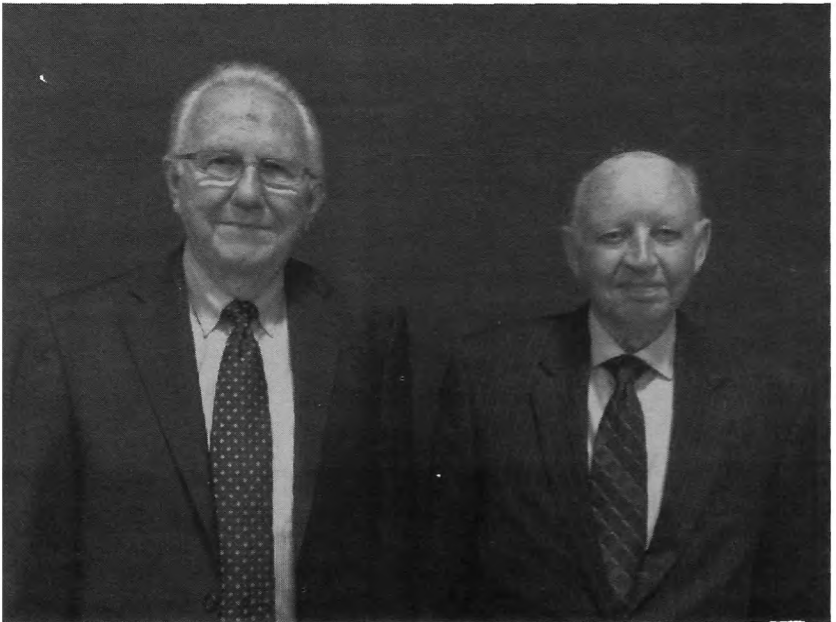
*Our family 2001*



*Ronny, Kevin Presley and Clint DeFrance New Year Meeting 2007*



Above: Ronny Wade and Allen Bailey  
Below: Ronny Wade and Johnny Elmore





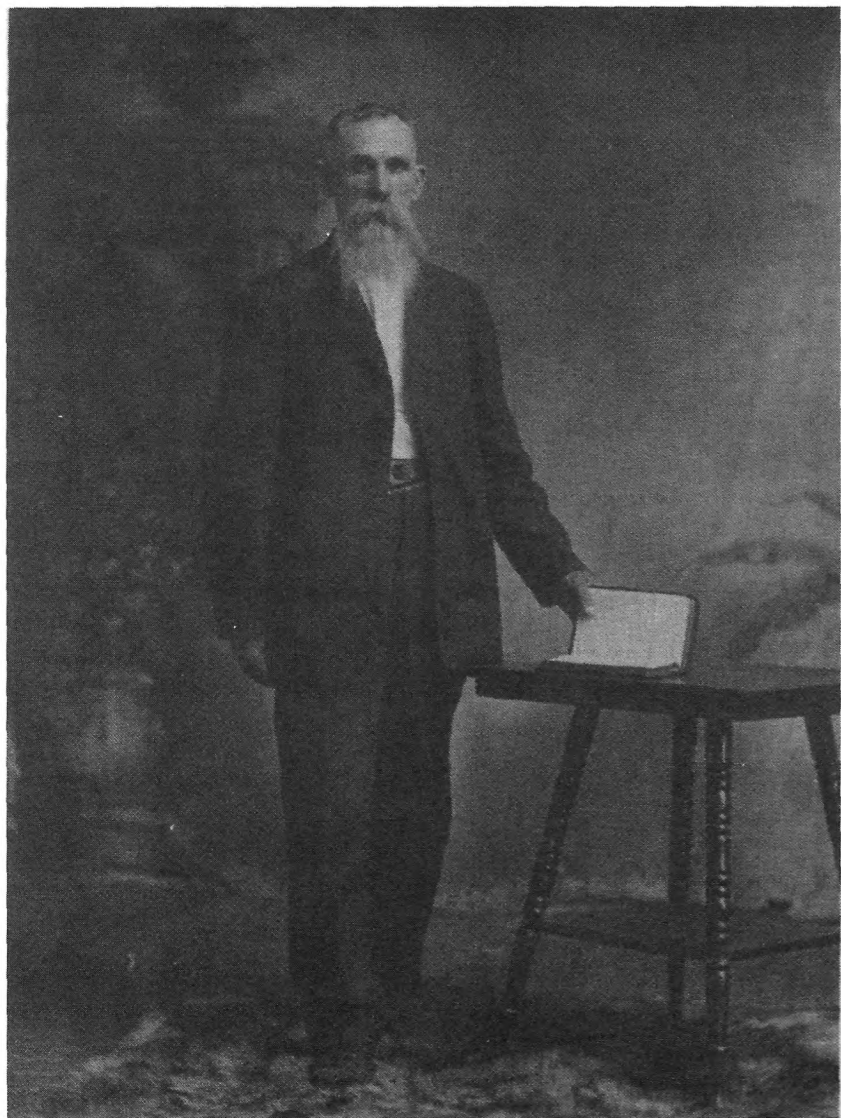


Irvin Barnes, Cullen Smith, Clint DeFrance, Ronny Wade  
{All three of these men traveled with Ronny  
when they first began to preach}



Ronny Wade and Paul Nichols





My great-grandfather, Jessie Benjamin Payne

## JESSIE BENJAMIN PAYNE

Jessie Benjamin Payne was born December 10, 1854, in Farmington, Missouri, and departed this life February 25, 1927, in Licking, Missouri. His earthly remains are buried in the Concord Cemetery near Licking. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, 1874, he was married to Frances C. Thornton at her home in Licking. To this union were born five sons and one daughter. Two of the sons died while young children. The following tribute is taken from "*Gospel Preachers That Blazed The Trail.*"

"J. B. Payne, age 55 years. Obeyed the gospel with his faithful wife, who was a faithful companion and zealous worker for the Master till she went to her reward two years ago, under the preaching of Jack Carnes, twenty years ago. Bro. Payne has ever been a persistent worker for what he believed the Bible to teach. Seeing the need of more preachers of the Gospel in its simplicity, and being persuaded by his wife and others to assist in the work, he began preaching a few years ago. Most of his work has been in the mountains of Missouri where he goes largely at his own charges. His children, three boys and one girl, are members of the church. I have been persuaded for years that the Gospel preachers are the most sacrificing men on earth, and in Bro. Payne you find one of that number."

In 1888, with his oldest son Spencer, Jessie Payne came to Hill County, Texas, by covered wagon. His wife and the younger children rode

the train. Three years later, he bought a farm located four miles west of Itasca, Texas, on which he built a house and, for the next sixteen or so years, raised crops to provide income for his family. After the children were all grown and some of them married, he and his wife moved back to Licking, Mo., sometime around 1907 or 1908, where they resided until their death.

The only daughter born to Jessie and Francis was Ethel Minnie, my grandmother. At the young age of sixteen, she met and married William Francis Wade, who was twenty-three at the time. Frank, as he was known to family and friends, had come to Texas from the state of Tennessee with his father, Thomas Wade, and older sister, Sally, when he was around five years of age. Their mother died during the trip to Texas. Because of his inability to raise the two children by himself, Thomas placed them with Julius and Nancy Hearne, who became their foster parents. Mr. Hearne was a cattle man and often Frank would go on cattle drives with him from Mexico through Texas. After his marriage to Ethel, he farmed land in the Itasca area. Frank and Ethel Wade had six children. The third, my father, was born December 20, 1906. At that time, preachers of the Church of Christ were active in Central Texas conducting gospel meetings in many of the small towns and rural communities. One of the most popular was Foy E. Wallace Sr. His reputation as a powerful voice for truth and right was legendary. Hence, my grandparents chose to name their newborn son Foy E. Wade, after Brother Wallace. According to the records that I have, all the children of Jessie and Francis Payne and all their spouses were members of the Church of Christ. Most of the men were active in teaching and participating in the public services of the church. Milton Payne, the third child of Jessie and Francis, left the farm at the age of eighteen and two years later enrolled in Gunter Bible College in Gunter, Texas. He was a student there from 1903-1905.

Many of the farms in this area of Texas were worked by itinerant farmers. Few families had sufficient funds to buy and work their own

place. The people living next to the farm of Frank and Ethel Wade were George Washington Ward and his wife, Viola Doggett Ward. The Ward family consisted of six girls and one boy. Foy Wade would often meet Inez, one of the Ward girls, and visit over the fence that separated the two farms. In 1926, both were students in West Fork School not far from where they lived. At the end of the term, Foy was promoted from the tenth to the eleventh grade and Inez was promoted from grade nine to grade ten. That fall on October 12<sup>th</sup> they were married. Foy was nineteen and Inez was sixteen. This union lasted for seventy-two years. By the time I arrived upon the scene, some ten years later, they were living in Cleburne, the County seat of Johnson County, Texas. Three years later, my only sister, Janis, was born. We lived in Cleburne until 1941, at which time we moved to Fort Worth. While in Cleburne, my father worked as a butcher for various grocery stores, and my mother worked for one of the local department stores. After I arrived, she stayed at home. It was here in Cleburne that I was first introduced to the church. My parents attended the Walnut St. Church of Christ. Even at the age of five, I still have a vivid memory of a Sunday when Walker Horn preached a scathing sermon on hell. For some reason, the events of the day made an impression on me that I have never forgotten. At some point prior to their move to Cleburne, my parents began attending the Christian Church. After locating in Cleburne, they attended a meeting at the Walnut St. church under the direction of Leland Knight. During the meeting, they renounced digression and took their stand with the brethren opposing instrumental music, Sunday schools, and a plurality of cups. When we moved to Ft. Worth, we attended the old Vaughn Blvd. church. It was here that I first began to learn what little I know about the Bible. In 1949, under the preaching of H.E. Robertson, I obeyed the gospel and was baptized on Saturday night, September the third.

When we first moved to Ft. Worth, my father had a job cutting meat for a store relatively close to the house where we lived. However, with the onset of World War II, he left that job and worked for the San-

ta Fe Railroad for a time which caused him to be away from home more than usual. During those years, we had no car and in order to get to church meetings, we would ride public transportation to the meeting place every Sunday. Missing church was out of the question. Times were hard and often making ends meet became difficult. My father, however, was a good provider not only for our family, but many times for two of my mother's sisters, who were plagued with emotional problems and often needed help. I never once heard him complain about this. Even though it put a financial strain on him, and the family in general, he continued to do what he had to do. Before I was born, my mother had lost her older sister, Alta, to cancer. Her death affected Mother more than a young boy could appreciate. I have felt that this loss, coupled with the strain of other siblings who were having difficulties, became a burden that took its toll on her, both physically and emotionally, through the years. My father departed this life at the age of ninety-one in 1998 after a brief illness, and mother followed in 2001 at the age of ninety after suffering a severe stroke. They both were privileged to live a long full life. Whatever I may accomplish in life I owe in great part to them, and thank God continually that I was privileged to grow up when and where I did.



Jessie Benjamin and Frances C. (Thorton) Payne  
1808

## A GLIMPSE OF GLORY

*Deut. 34:1-6*

This very sad account tells us that God allowed Moses to glimpse or view the promised land before his death, but because of his disobedience, recorded in Numbers 20:10, he was not permitted to enter or take possession of the land. What a bitter disappointment this must have been. Could it be that the glimpse only increased his desire to see and know more about that land for which he had labored so long?

I have often wished that the Bible had told us more about our eternal home. It gives us just the briefest glimpse of that magnificent city. However, anyone who knows anything about the glory awaiting the faithful child of God will never be satisfied to live in this world.

If you don't have a desire to go to heaven, then you are not ready to die. You have unattended business. You have a decision to make. The longitude and latitude of your life are not fixed correctly until a faith is born in your soul that counsels a "desire for a better country, that is an heavenly one."

Early Christians and men of old looked forward to a better place.

Paul---Phil. 1:21, “I am in a strait between two having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better...”

Peter---2 Pet. 3:11-12, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Stephen “looked up, into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,” Acts 7:55.

Abraham sought it (Heb. 11:10), “For he wanted a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.”

Jesus promised it in John 14:1-3, “Let not your heart be troubled, if you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions...”

Do you ever think of heaven and what it will be to be there? We would all do well to “set our affections on things above...” Col. 3:1-2.

## **WHY DO WE LONG FOR HEAVEN?**

### **I. Heaven is Glorious because Jesus is there.**

A. John 14:1-3, “Let not your hearts be troubled for if 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 and if I go I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also.”

B. It will not be the pearly gates, or the jasper walls, or the street paved with transparent gold, that will make it heaven to us. These would not satisfy us forever. But it will be Jesus who will make heaven—heaven.

C. Paul wanted to be with Jesus:

2 Cor. 5:8, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Phil. 1:23, “...a desire to depart and be with Christ.”

1 Jno. 3:2, “...we know we’ll be like Him when He comes.”

“When all my labors and trials are o’er, And I am safe on that beautiful shore,

Just to be near the dear Lord I adore, will through the ages be glory for me.”

## II. Heaven Is A Better Place.

Inspiration tells us that heaven is a “better place” (Heb. 10:34). “For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

Pertaining to the patriarchs permanently enshrined in Inspiration’s Hall of Faith in Heb. 11, we read, “But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city,” Heb. 11:16.

### 1. The Beauty of That Better Country.

Rev. 21:1-4, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...”

“And I, John, saw the holy city....prepared as a bride for her husband.”

Verse 10, “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city...”

Verse 11, “Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like jasper stone.”

Beauty beyond our ability to comprehend.



2. The Benefits of That Better Country.

There we shall rest, the rest of the redeemed. Rev. 14:13, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

Heb. 4:9, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”

a. In heaven, we will rest from the constant struggle with sin and the trying association with sinful people. “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Rev. 22:15 “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

b. We will rest from the curse of sin, for it shall be no more. Rev. 22:3, “And there shall be no more curse.” Satan will have his due. Rev. 20:10, “And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

c. Rest from the toils of life, where we can lay our burdens down. (Some have carried such heavy burdens in this life. Physical disabilities, sickness, pain, disappointments, abused, etc.)

In heaven, there will be no more blindness, cancer, debilitating arthritis, stroke, physical deformities, etc. We will be freed from the pain and sorrow of this life. There will be no tears in heaven. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and their shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall their be any more pain; for the former things have passed away.”

a. Life here is filled with crying. So much sadness and sorrow. Unbidden tears often stain our cheeks, because our hearts are breaking. All

grief that causes tears will no longer exist. The hurts, the partings, the sorrow that engulfs this world will all have been removed. There will be no tears in heaven because there will be nothing to make you cry.

b. The pale horse and his rider, death, will never invade the heavenly realm. What a contrast to this weary world where teeming thousands pay “nature’s final debt” daily. Here we experience the lonely loss of precious parents, cherished children, beloved brethren, faithful friends and noble neighbors. But in heaven there will be no more lines of the bereaved standing beside open caskets. No more funeral processions slowly driving to the waiting cemeteries. Death is such a waste, a part of the terrible consequences of sin. The grim reaper will never be allowed in the Holy City. WE LONG FOR A BETTER PLACE.

c. Sorrow knows no respect of persons. It is the common lot of all humanity.

It invades the mansions of the wealthy and the shacks of the poverty-stricken.

One may rise today from a sweet night of peaceful slumber feeling perfectly happy and yet the day may witness a sorrow sweeping into his life that will make sadness his lifetime companion.

If an earthly country could advertise with truthfulness the guaranteed remedy for the pained of our day, it could never accommodate the masses who would immediately congregate there.

d. Pain is universal. It is written upon the faces of the aged, heard from the lips of the chronically ill, and witnessed in the mangled forms of the critically injured. To witness such only makes us yearn for that better place where pain, sorrow, tears, and death will never touch the inhabitants of that glorious city.

### 3. The Bliss of That Better Country.

“When the lovely promised land with spirit eyes shall see;

We’ll join the holy angel band in praise dear Lord to Thee.”

“What a song of delight in that city so bright will be wafted ‘neath heaven’s fair dome, How the ransomed will raise happy songs in His praise, When all of God’s singers get home.”

Rev. 15:2-4, “And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and song of the lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy, For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”

Rev. 19:7-8, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.” I want a reserved seat when they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. I want to be a part of the bliss, happiness, and celebration of that great day.

### III. Heaven Means Home

a. When I was a boy, I often played with my friends until dusk. As the shadows of night began to fall, the call would come from my mother, “Its time to come home.” I will never forget the finality of that call, nor the concern which it contained. Home is a wonderful thought, especially at evening, when the day is done. I miss home the most at evening time, a place of genuine concern, a place of security, of love and sharing, of comfort and happiness. When one of the greatest short story writers who ever lived, O’ Henry, lay dying, his attendant

dimmed the light by the bed. Came the feeble request by the author, "Put on the light. I don't want to go home in the dark."

Heaven is going home, and that means reunion.

b. Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 4:13, "But I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus... Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord..."

"O think of the saints over there, who before us the journey have trod,  
Of the songs that they breathe on the air, in their home in the palace of God. Over there, over there, oh think of the saints over there."  
What a great homecoming.

c. Will We Know One Another In Heaven? I believe we will.

Abraham the great Patriarch died at the age of 175. "Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah..." Note the sequence: He died, he was gathered to his people, his body was buried. This phrase "gathered to his people" is recorded many times at the death of many Old Testament worthies such as: Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, Moses, and Josiah. Regarding Moses, Deut. 31:16 says, "Behold you will rest with your fathers."

This could not refer to his physical body, for it was buried "in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor." (Deut. 34:6). So what does the expression mean? "Gathered, i.e. to be collected, gathered together...used of entering Hades, where the Hebrews regarded their ancestors as being gathered together. This gathering to one's father's,

or one's people, is distinguished both from death and burial" (Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon p 626).

Abraham has been "gathered to his people" until that day when his dust shall live again at the sound of the last trumpet. When Isaac and Ishmael were "gathered to their people," did they recognize their father, Abraham? It would be foolish to deny they did not.

The child born to David and Bathsheba died after a week of suffering (2 Sam. 12:15-23). Grief stricken David, with his child yet unburied, said, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." What comfort would David have of being with his child again, if he could not recognize or distinguish him from mine?

D. Reunion day!

Just think of being able to talk to Noah about the flood, to Peter about the day of Pentecost and to Paul about his sermons to Agrippa and Felix. What a reunion that will be. Mothers whose babies were snatched from their arms, small children suddenly taken away, children who were bewildered as their mothers and fathers are carried to an early grave, wives and husbands who are parted after years of living together all speak loudly of a better place where all broken hearts are mended. Somewhere, friend, those who have gone before are awaiting our homecoming. Someday that reunion will take place.

There are loved ones in glory, whose dear forms we often miss,

When we finish this earthly story, shall we join them in their bliss?

Will the circle be unbroken by and by, by and by?

There's a better home awaiting, in the sky, in the sky.

In this world which has been spoiled and marred by sin, I have seen enough of God's handiwork so that I want to see the world to come.

HOW BEAUTIFUL HEAVEN MUST BE.

Whatever I have been able to do in this world, I want the eternal opportunity to see what I can do in the best of all worlds, under the best of all conditions, in the midst of the best of all folk.

I want to go to heaven, that better place, don't you?

## THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM

(The Passion Of The Christ)

Our scripture reading today is taken from Luke 23:33-38 and 44-46. These verses depict for us the crucifixion and death of our Lord, Jesus the Christ. Countless millions of people have died since the beginning of time, but this death was different. Most deaths bring only tears, this one brought happiness. Most deaths bring only darkness, but this one brought light. Most deaths represent the end of something, but this one was the beginning of something. Those who stood nearby said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54). This death, though different, may be summed up in four words: **There-They-Crucified-Him.**

There: (Where Was Christ Crucified?) As someone has so appropriately said: Calvary, the place of curse and the place of blessing; Calvary, where we see man at his worst and God at His best; Calvary, where the Lamb of God was slain and where the Son of God gave up His life for you and me; Calvary, where we see the awful depths of human sin and the tremendous heights of divine love; Calvary, where every man must come if he expects to be saved; Calvary, where all our hopes are centered, both for this world and the next. It was here, in this place, that Jesus died for us. Without doubt this was a cruel place. In the Hebrew: Golgotha. In the Greek and Latin: Calvary.

Both mean the “place of a skull.” We are not sure why it meant the place of a skull, perhaps because it was the place of execution or hill shaped like a skull. Regardless, it was a place where men died, a place of cruelty and punishment, a place of pain and agony. It was also a shameful place, between two thieves. Hebrews 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In the days when Christ confronted the cross and perished upon it, it symbolized all that was degrading, humiliating, shameful, and horrible. It stood for all the crimes, debaucheries, treacheries, and brutal sins of which the cross was the penalty. It was a shameful place. But it was also an appropriate place: outside the walls of the city. Heb. 13:11-12, “For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” The Jews were not allowed to eat the flesh of any sin-offering whose blood was carried into the Sanctuary by the High Priest. The flesh of all such victims had to be carried without the camp, and there consumed by fire. Hence, the Jew, as a practicing Jew, would be prohibited from partaking of the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus died outside the camp, i.e. outside the city (city of Jerusalem was the camp of Israel at that time). He bore our sins in His own body without the camp. All who would partake of the benefits of His sacrifice must do so without the gate. The idea being that they must forsake the camp of Israel, leaving Judaism behind them and take upon them the reproach of Jesus, if they would be made partakers of the benefits of His death. But Calvary was also a conspicuous place. It was located beside a well traveled road. Mk. 15:29-30, “And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha, You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross.” A large crowd gathered to watch, many of them making sport of the one who hung suspended between heaven



and earth as though He was fit for neither.

But notice: They (Who Was Responsible?) Many have both questioned and disagreed about who actually put Jesus to death. The scriptures plainly indicate that the Jews planned His death. Mt. 27:1-2, "When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor." Mt. 27:20, "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed." The Jews not only planned but also demanded the death of Jesus. Mark 15:12-14, "Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again, "Crucify Him." Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him." To believe what the Bible says about who crucified Jesus does not make one anti-Semitic, any more than recognizing that the Germans were responsible for killing millions during World War II makes one anti-German. The Jews are by and large still anti-Christ today, refusing to believe that He is the promised Messiah. Have you ever wondered why Christian beliefs and morals are so often maligned on TV and in movies? Could it be because seven Jewish Americans run the majority of TV networks, the press, the movie and book industries, and recording industries? These seven Jewish men collectively control ABC, CBS, NBC, Turner Broadcasting, CNN, MTV, Universal Studios, MCA Records, and seven other record companies. Regardless of what men may say or conclude, it is obvious from the scriptures that the Jews of that day were responsible for the death of our Lord. They did not act alone, however. The Roman soldiers beat Him with the brutality of animals. They led to the spot and nailed the spikes in His hands and feet. They dropped the cross into the ground, made sport of Him and cast lots for His garments. They were professional murderers doing their job and doing it well. Another participant in the death of Christ was the angry mob. The Jews did not have enough

political influence to make Christ go to the cross had He been unwilling to go, nor did the Roman soldiers have enough legionnaires to force Him there. Jesus went willingly. John 10:17-18, "...I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself..." He went to the cross for us. Indirectly, we were responsible, for we were sinners and He died in our behalf. Our sins nailed Him to the Cross. The bonds of love were stronger than the bonds of force. 1 Cor. 15:3, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." 2 Cor. 5:21, "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf; that He might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Crucified: The Cross was equal to the gallows of our day, the electric chair of His age. A very cruel instrument, the victim died a torturous death. There was nothing to shelter from the biting cold or scorching heat. Historians claim that some victims lived for weeks until birds came and plucked out their eyes. But the Cross was only the conclusion: look at Him as He leaves the upper room. Passing through the city, He crosses the Brook Kedron into the Garden. As He prays, drops of sweat as blood appear. Medically, this is a condition known as hematidrosis, or blood sweat. There are times when, under great emotional stress, the tiny capillaries in the sweat glands break, thus mixing blood with sweat. The mob arrives and drags Him through the streets of Jerusalem in the middle of the night. He is taken before Annas and Caiaphas, where He was tried and condemned, in a series of trials that last all night. After dawn, battered and bruised, dehydrated and exhausted from a sleepless night, He is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia and Pilate. Pilate sends Him to Herod, where He was mocked and ridiculed. Then He is returned to Pilate. Pilate tries to appease the people by having Jesus scourged. In scourging, the prisoner is stripped of his clothing and his hands are tied to a post above his head. The Roman legionnaire steps forward with a short whip consisting of several heavy leather thongs in his hand. Two small balls of lead are attached near the end of each. At first, the thongs cut the skin only, then, as the blows con-

tinue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues. Initially, there is just an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of skin, but finally spurting arterial bleeding from the vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is a mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped. The half fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. He is then led toward the hill of Calvary. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the cross is too much; He stumbles and falls. He tries to get up, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. At this point, Simon of Cyrene comes and carries the cross. Jesus follows, bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock, until the 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is completed. Stripped of His clothes, He is thrown backward with His shoulders pinned against the wood. The legionnaire then drives the spikes in His hands. The Cross is then lifted to an upright position, His feet are now pressed backward and extended downward. Spikes are driven through each arch. The victim is now crucified and the wait for death begins. When the victim places his weight on his wrists, it brings sheer agony. As he stretches up, placing weight on his feet, rhythms of pain rush throughout his body. Soon his arms fatigue, as great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, resulting in deep throbbing pain. Eventually, although air can be drawn in to the lungs, it cannot be exhaled, causing the victim to fight for breath. It is at this point that our dear Lord utters the now famous sayings from the cross:

1. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The original indicates that "He kept on saying." Think about it: when the nails tore His flesh, He said, "Father, forgive them"; when He was lifted up on the Cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them"; when the crowd jeered, He prayed, "Father, forgive them"; when the soldiers gambled for His garments, He prayed, "Father, forgive them." No one knows

how many times these words pierced the heavens. He kept storming the throne of grace in behalf of others. How little of us who refuse or withhold forgiveness from our fellow man for such petty and foolish reasons.

2. To the thief, He said, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

3. To John, the beloved disciple, He said, "Behold thy mother"; to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son." Can you imagine the feeling that swept over her? In Luke 2:35, Simeon had told Mary when Jesus was a baby, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul, also." Now the prophecy is fulfilled, the sword is piercing her soul. The first to plant a tender kiss on His brow, now that brow is crowned with thorns. She had held the little hands as He took His first steps, now they are nailed to a cross. She had guided the little feet in the right way, now they are nailed to a tree. Surely she wept bitter tears, and her poor heart broke.

She no doubt remembered the words of Simeon.

4. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me..."

5. "I thirst."

6. "It is finished."

With one last surge of strength, He presses His torn feet against the nail, straightening His legs and takes a deeper breath.

7. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

The common method of ending crucifixion was by breaking the legs of the victim. This prevented the person from pushing upward, thus the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest and suffocation quickly followed. The legs of the two thieves were broken. But Jesus was already dead. A lance was driven through his side, and

forthwith there comes blood and water. Some have speculated that the water came from the pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart, and the blood came from the interior of the heart itself. Be that as it may, John assures us by these words that Jesus actually died. It was no fake, there was no cover up. Jesus was dead.

Him: The cross of Calvary stands on the skyline of history, marking a small spot known by men around the world because of the One who died there. Not “a man,” but the Son of God. The centurion confessed, “Truly, this was the Son of God.” Most people, it seems, were glad when Jesus died, with the exception of a few fisherman and some humble women. “But all of His acquaintances, and the women, who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.” He was cursed by His nation, mourned only by a few. Today, no death stands more brightly and joyously than that of Christ. It has been 2000 years since He died. Coins bear witness to His influence by the date they bear. He stands today as the one eternal and lasting hope for a sin-wearied world. We have the hope of eternal life, all because: **There They Crucified Him.**

At Calvary: Where “God so loved the world that He gave His Son,” where “God commended His love toward us,” where “Christ Himself bore our sins in His own body,” where “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,” where “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him”, and where by “His stripes we are healed.” Praise God for His unspeakable gift.

## A CHURCH OF CHRIST CONFSSIONAL

In the year 1215, the Roman Catholic Church began its now famous “auricular (in the ear) confessional.” Under Catholicism, when a person sinned, he was considered unfit to take the communion until confession was made. The confession might be followed by some requirement imposed by the priest in order to impress upon the individual the seriousness of his guilt, thus turning him to righteousness. Once the requirement was fulfilled, the sinner then returned to the priest for absolution or forgiveness. The basis of the Catholic confessional is couched in the idea that ordinary Christians are not fit to pray for forgiveness themselves, hence they must confess to a priest. Such a doctrine and practice overlooks the plain Bible teaching regarding the vital work of Christ as our High Priest. After atoning for our sins on the cross, He offered His blood to God as our priest and obtained eternal redemption for those who believe.

The New Testament teaches that this was done once for all time (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10-14). Through the high priesthood of Christ, **all Christians are priests**. We learn from Rev. 1:6 that we are a “kingdom of priests...” The entire body of believers is designated as “a holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5) and a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). There is no special priesthood in the church of Christ. Every child of God has access to the throne of grace and is exhorted to “come boldly” thereto in order to find grace to help in time of need. Unfortunately

today, some preachers are sounding strangely like the Catholics in their attempts to get Christians to come down front and make confession of their sins. Such statements as “every Christian needs to make a public confession every now and then,” or “it doesn’t hurt anybody to make a public confession every so often,” or “Christians should make a confession at least three times a year” (the Catholics said at least once a year) have absolutely no basis in Bible teaching whatsoever. For someone to intimidate an audience by suggesting that “everyone here must be perfect” since no one has come forward is an indication that the preacher is way out of line. In most of our services, the preaching is preceded by a prayer. In that prayer, the brother usually prays for “God to forgive us of all our unforgiven sins.” Did God hear that prayer? Did God answer that prayer? Then why the “high pressure” and “guilt trips” used when the invitation is extended? Someone may be thinking “you must not believe in anyone making a public confession.” Wrong. I do believe in people making public confessions if they have committed public sins. However, I do not believe it is right for people to come before the church and confess private sins, or sins against individuals whom they have failed to approach, as the scriptures indicate they should. When someone makes a confession before the church such as “I just feel I haven’t been as close to the Lord as I should have,” or “I have had some bad feelings lately about some of the brethren,” or “I just feel spiritually weak and want the prayers of the church,” they are confessing matters that should have been taken care of privately. I recently had an individual come forward to make a confession. After telling me that was their desire, I asked, “What have you done?” They replied, “Oh, that’s personal.” Well, if it’s personal, then it should be handled on a personal basis and not before the church. We are getting mighty close to Catholicism when Christians are led to believe that the only way to handle personal and/or private sins is for them to come before the church and confess to a preacher what they have done and then have him pray for them. What sins must be confessed?

The Bible teaches that all known sins must be confessed to God (1 Jno. 1:9). The only way we can be forgiven is to repent of our sins and confess them. But to what extent should sins be confessed to the brethren and before the congregation? In Acts 8:18, we have the account of Simon who offered to buy, with money, the power given by the Holy Spirit. Peter's reply to him is straight and to the point: "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." Peter did not say, "You need to come before the church and make a confession," but he said, "Repent and pray to God." Simon was a Christian, albeit a weak one. As a Christian, he was a priest and had access to the throne of grace. Peter told him to use it. Why not a public confession before the church? Evidently Simon, the apostles, and God were the only ones involved in this matter, hence no need to bring it before the church. The fact that Simon requested Peter pray for him only underscores the truth taught by James in 5:16 of his epistle, i.e. that we should confess to one another and pray for one another in such situations. In Matthew 18:15-17, we read, "Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." In these verses, we see the journey from private to public clearly charted. At first, had the sinning brother repented and confessed his sin, prayer could have been offered and the matter would have been ended. Secondly, had he listened to the two or three and repented and confessed, prayer could have been offered and the matter ended. Finally, however, when the sin was brought before the church and became public knowledge, the only recourse



was public acknowledgment with repentance, confession and prayer for forgiveness.

Hence, sins known only to God should be confessed only to God; sins known only to one or a few should be confessed only to the one or the few; public sin, sin known to all, should be confessed publicly and before the church. Consider carefully the words of Guy N. Woods in his book *Questions and Answers Volume II*, “The deplorable practice of establishing, in religious meetings, a “confessional,” in which the purest and best and most faithful members of the church are prompted by contrived and emotional devices to respond to a public invitation to confess sin because of the shortcomings common to all of us, is a travesty of God’s plan and a prostitution of the teaching of the New Testament touching the proper procedure in such matters.” What about the idea that it “doesn’t hurt anyone to make a confession at church every now and then?” Is such an idea right? Such an idea is only right if the sin is a public. There is simply no scripture that teaches such confessions are desirable or necessary for private, personal sins. If so, where is it? Brethren, we need to be careful that we do not demand or encourage practices about which the Bible is silent. Playing on the emotions of sincere people in an attempt to get them to do something God has not required is serious business.

## LEGALIZING SIN

In our sermon today, I want to talk with you about the legalization of sin. The very idea that some might try to legalize something that is wrong raises the question of what happens when civil law conflicts with the God's law. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul discusses the purpose and power of civil authorities. He points out that civil government is ordained of God and that those who resist this power, resist God. Civil government is not a terror to good works, but to evil. The civil servant, as part of his duty, punishes those who break the law. Hence people who obey the law have no reason to fear. When the government or its agents overstep the authority or right that God gave them, they do so without His approval. If a Christian receives a command or is required by law to engage in that which is prohibited by God, the Christian would have to disobey the civil servant. Whatever rights are granted to civil servants, they do not include the right to command men like Peter and John to "not speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Peter and John disobeyed their command, they had no choice. In the same way, civil rulers do not have the power to grant a right not extended by God. The legalization of sinful practices by the government, local or federal, does not make the practice right for the people of God. Some may find this disagreeable. In fact, they might argue that if it is legal, it is their business to do as they please. However, the servant of God realizes that divine law is higher than

man-made law. Today, civil law approves of many things that divine law prohibits. First of all, I would like to discuss: Legalized Intoxicants (Alcohol and other forms of Drugs for Social Use).

The use of alcohol and/or drugs is a widespread problem in the world today. It is estimated that about seventy percent of Americans drink some mixture of alcohol, nearly ten million Americans use cocaine, and a survey of teenagers thirteen to eighteen revealed that twenty-six percent used marijuana on a regular basis. Drunkenness is condemned in the scripture, and that principle is understood to extend to all mind-altering addictive drugs. Very few, if any, challenge the idea that drunkenness is condemned in the Bible. Luke 21:34, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly." Romans 13:13, "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy." 1 Cor. 6:10, "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Peter 4:3, "For we have spent enough of our past life time in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." But why is drunkenness wrong? First of all, it is wrong because it impairs judgment. Isaiah 28:7, "...the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." Alcohol in the blood progressively suppresses the operation of those areas of the brain on which persons depend for clear insights and rational decisions. The Bible teaches that judgment is a characteristic to be cultivated, not destroyed or compromised. Phil. 1:9, "and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, i.e. (perception, discernment). Secondly, it steals away the drinker's self control. The desire for alcohol increases with indulgence. The more you drink, the more you desire to drink. 2 Peter 1:5-6 teaches us to add temperance to our lives. That is self-control. The

decision to take the first drink or experiment with drugs indicates a weakness in self-control to start with. After loss of self-control, the drinker is defenseless against other sins. Proverbs 25:28, "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control" (NIV). How many fights, brawls, acts of fornication, adultery, child abuse, and even murder have been committed by people under the influence of alcohol or drugs who otherwise would have never dreamed of such things? Prolonged indulgence (in some cases only brief indulgence) leads to addiction. No one starts drinking with the ambition of becoming an alcoholic; yet 200,000 people per year become just that. According to the National Council on Alcoholism, there are nearly ten million alcoholics in the U. S. today. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that nineteen percent of adolescents or 3.3 million young people ages fourteen to seventeen are problem drinkers. Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Proverbs 23:29, "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine." Gal. 5:21 declares that those who participate in drunkenness "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." What about social drinking? On a continuum between drunkards on one end and the total abstainers on the other, there exist in the middle a large number of people who only drink occasionally. These people call themselves "social drinkers." Alcohol is the only drug with which people use this kind of reasoning. Seldom does anyone say "its all right to smoke marijuana, so long as you don't use too much and get high." "Know when to say when" has become a popular saying among those who encourage the drinking of alcoholic beverages. The idea of drinking socially without drunkenness is at variance with the scriptures. Ephesians 5:18, "be not drunk with wine." "Drunk" (from methusko) means "to make drunk, or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in methuo [drunkenness]) to be-

come intoxicated” W. E. Vine p. 343. It is important to note drunkenness is a process and not merely a state. This is important since most social drinkers argue that they are not drunk until they reach an excessive state of drunkenness. The American Heritage Dictionary on P. 673 under Intoxicate says: l. to induce, esp. by the effect of ingested alcohol, any of a series of progressively deteriorating states, ranging from exhilaration to stupefaction.” Since drunkenness involves a process, Christians must avoid that which sets the process in motion; that is, never take the first drink.

Another sin that has recently been legalized is **Abortion**. Abortion was made legal by the Supreme Court in 1973, but is it right? In Romans 1:31, Paul speaks of those who are without natural affection. This refers to those who do not possess the love and attachment which nature teaches all mothers to have for their young. The word literally means “no love of kindred.” Abortion is one of the clearest expressions of this vice that is condemned by God. We are all shocked when we hear or read about some parent who mistreats or murders his or her child. We don’t understand that. Even though we reject such events, history confirms that the practice of murdering small children was common among the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Chinese, and Hindus. The Nazi Holocaust began with the elimination of almost 300,000 Aryan German citizens who were considered defective. Before Hitler finished, his Nazi war machine had murdered six million Jews, plus another six million Gypsies, Poles, and prisoners of war. What a horrible deed. We are repulsed by such actions, and yet we continue to murder thousands every year through abortion. Any woman who could destroy the child within her womb would have to be judged as one “without natural affection.” During the decade of the Vietnam War, there were 58,655 American war casualties. Our country now kills more unborn babies than that every fifteen days. During the six major wars fought by this country, we sustained 1,160,591 casualties. This is a terrible loss. However, since abortion was legalized in this country in 1973, over 31 million unborn babies

have been murdered by their mothers (4,400 every day; 1,600,000 every year). Proverbs 6:16-17, "There are six things which Jehovah hates; yea, seven which are an abomination unto him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood..." Abortion sheds innocent blood. It is estimated that in a recent year in New York City alone, more than 600,000 abortions were performed. Think about it, 600,000 innocent lives taken. These victims died without the benefit of a trial or counsel. They were not convicted criminals, but innocent unborn human babies. Such makes Pharaoh's extermination of Hebrew boys appear as only a ripple on the ocean of time. The slaughter of babes in Bethlehem by Herod would not equal one abortion clinic's daily quota.

History of Abortion: In the Greek world, abortion and infanticide were commonly practiced as a means of family limitation. We are not to conclude that such was accepted by everyone. The Hippocratic Oath states, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest such counsel; furthermore, I will not give a woman an instrument to produce abortion." (World Book, under Hippocrates). Abortion was also practiced during the period of the Roman Empire. The practice was punishable by banishment or death, but as the Empire grew more decadent, the laws were not enforced. With the coming of Christianity, abortion was vehemently condemned. Early extra-biblical writings reflect the opposition of Christians to abortion from the earliest times. The Epistle of Barnabas (AD 138) states, "Thou shalt not kill the child by abortions." The Didache (AD 80) ranks abortion with the sins forbidden in the Ten Commandments. Tertullian (AD 240) calls abortion homicide. On January 22, 1973, abortion became legal in the United States. Since that time, countless millions of unborn children have been aborted out of selfishness and immorality.

When Does Life Begin? The primary question that demands an answer is this: Is the fetus a human life? Is that which is growing in the mother's body alive? The Supreme Court did not address this vital

question. They only determined that a woman had a right to an abortion if she wanted one. The answer to this question, however, is crucial in the determination of truth regarding this all important subject.

What The Bible Says: 1. Life is a gift from God. “He gives life and breath to all things.” Acts 17:25. God alone has the right to take man’s life. Only human life is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Because of this, human life is elevated to a plane above all other forms of earthly life. Christ taught the value of human life in John 3:16. “God so loved the world (people in it) that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Mark 16:15-16, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Little children were precious to Jesus according to Matthew 19:14. It was the Master who called a little child and set him in the midst of them saying, “Except you be converted and become as this little child, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” In scripture, there is no distinction between babes in the womb and those born. The word “brephos” in the Greek is used to describe the baby in Elisabeth’s womb and is used interchangeably for both prenatal and postnatal babies (Luke 1:41). It means “an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a babe.” (Thayer, page 105). Anyone who questions this should ask themselves, “Was it the Christ-child in Mary’s womb or just a lifeless blob of fetal tissue?” The following scriptures teach that the unborn child is a human being: Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee.” If Jeremiah’s mother had chosen to have an abortion, she would have killed Jeremiah. Isaiah 49:1, 5, “Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye peoples, from far; Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name...and now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant.” This indicates that Isaiah was a person before birth. Job 3:11, “Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not give up the

ghost when my mother bore me?" If the fetus had died in the womb, it would have been a person, it would have been Job. The scriptures teach "thou shalt not kill," i.e. "thou shalt do no murder." The deliberate taking of a human life is murder. Abortion intentionally kills a human life. The abortion victim is totally innocent, having done no wrong towards the mother, the doctor or society.

Murderers Will Be Punished. Exodus 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill," (Deuteronomy 27:25). "Cursed be he that taketh a bribe to slay an innocent person." Proverbs 6:16-17, God hates "those who shed innocent blood." God hates abortion. What does God think of the premeditated taking of a child's life? We cannot take the sin of abortion lightly; "Lo children are a heritage of the Lord," and the fruit of the womb is his reward (Psalms 127:3). Abortion may be legal, but it is clearly wrong.

The Significance of Abortion in Our Society. Abortion signifies a rejection of the knowledge of God. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." (Romans 1:28-31). Abortion on demand signifies that family values are on the decline, as well as sexual morals. Marriage is honorable in all (Heb.13:4). Fornication is a sin (1 Cor. 6:18). "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commiteth fornication sinneth against his own body". The sin of fornication is often responsible for unwanted pregnancy, which results in abortion. Abortion is evidence of a loss of respect for human life. "And God said, let us make man in our own image and after our likeness..." Man is not a brute animal, but a person created in the image of God. Since



abortion is murder, it is but another manifestation of how little we value human life in our society today. Abortion indicates that covetousness is taking our land by storm. Children are discarded, like garbage, because they will cramp someone's lifestyle. "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses" (Luke 12:15). When someone chooses death over life, their own pleasure over the joy of being a parent, all to enjoy a self-indulgent lifestyle, there is trouble abroad in the land. Everyone should give serious thought to what God says about abortion. He will not let this grievous sin go unpunished. If God will not permit us to kill a child already born and get by with it, neither will He let us get by with killing an unborn child. Abortion is sin, it is murder in the first degree. Consider this tragic inconsistency: If a person takes an egg containing the pre-born American bald eagle and destroys that little pre-birth environment, thus destroying the baby eagle developing within, that person can be fined a great amount of money and could even be subject to criminal action and prison time for killing a bird. But the same person can take a human child in its pre-born environment and not only murder that child, but receive government funding to do so.

## **SAME SEX MARRIAGES**

Another area recently legalized in some states is same-sex marriages. This assault on marriage is designed to devalue marriage to the point that homosexual relationships are viewed as being equal to what God gave. However, homosexual marriage is not an extension or promotion of marriage; it is another step on the path of putting an end to it. It is wrong for the following reasons:

1. It is completely contrary to God's law. Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh." Jesus teaches the same principle in Matthew 19:4-6. If homosexuality is condemned in the scriptures,

and it is (see Romans 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:22), what makes anyone think that God will smile on a union of two homosexuals?

2. Homosexual marriage fosters immorality in society and in other areas. Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, all of whom have incorporated full homosexual marriage rights over the past ten to fifteen years, have seen jumps in out of wedlock births since they legalized homosexual marriage. The deterioration of the traditional family structure has ushered in an era where increasing numbers of children are born outside of marriage. How then can homosexual marriage strengthen the family? It will obviously weaken the overall family structure.

3. Homosexual marriages are not just a political issue, but a moral issue as well. In fact, it is first and foremost a moral issue. The liberals have tried to move the issue of homosexual rights and now homosexual marriage off the moral table and into the “civil rights” arena, which is purely political. This, however, is not a civil rights issue. It is a moral one. And while it may be legal in some states and nations, it is clearly wrong. It is a slap in the face of God and a denial of His sacred laws. All God fearing people must oppose it. Legalization does not translate into Divine approval. There is a higher power to which we are all responsible.

## WHAT IS WRONG WITH SUNDAY SCHOOLS OR BIBLE CLASSES?

In the year 1780, in a part of town known as Sooty Alley, Robert Raikes, editor of the *Gloucester Journal*, gathered a few children together to teach them reading and the Church Catechism. On November 3, 1793, some thirteen years later, he made known to the world his scheme of Sunday schools through the columns of the paper which he edited. Within four years it would grow to include over 250,000 children. While Raikes receives the major credit for the idea of Sunday schools, some believe that it should really be shared by a number of clergymen. The idea spread rapidly throughout religious circles of the day. There was, however, some opposition, but not strong enough to stall the new movement. Today, throughout the world, people of most religions practice or utilize some type of teaching arrangement that can be traced back to the beginnings of the Sunday School Movement. Many, if not most, think it strange that anyone would oppose the teaching of the Bible in Sunday schools or Bible classes. "What in the world could be wrong with that," they ask? There is obviously nothing wrong with teaching the Bible. We are commanded to do that. Surely there is nothing wrong with instructing children in spiritual matters. Why then, is the Sunday school an unscriptural arrangement for such teaching? The answer is quite simple: such an arrangement is without divine authorization. There is no Bible for

such a practice. It was not taught or practiced by our Lord. Nor was it utilized by the early Church. The apostles did not endorse such a practice; in fact, it was totally unknown in New Testament times. It is therefore wrong for the following reasons:

**1. Sunday schools or Bible classes violate the Bible pattern for the public teaching of the Bible.**

The pattern for the common assembly is exemplified numerous times in the New Testament scriptures. Acts 14:27, "And when they were come, and had **gathered the church together**, they rehearsed all that God had done with them..." Acts 15:39, "So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had **gathered the multitude together**, they delivered the epistle." Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples **came together** to break bread, Paul preached to them..." 1 Corinthians 11:20, "When ye **come together therefore into one place**, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." 1 Corinthians 11:33, "Wherefore my brethren when ye **come together to eat**, tarry one for another." 1 Corinthians 14:23, "If therefore the **whole church be come together into one place**, and all speak with tongues and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the **assembling of yourselves together** as the manner of some is..." All of the above passages speak of the church **coming together** for the purpose of teaching the Bible and observing the Lord's Supper. Not one verse in the entire New Testament teaches that the church ever came together and arranged into classes for the teaching of the scriptures. If so, where is it? From these scriptures we see a pattern emerging, i.e. **one man at a time, speaking to one audience**. Never do we have two men speaking at the same time. That would be confusion and confusion is condemned in 1 Corinthians 14:33. Nor do we find the church arranging into simultaneous classes to teach spiritual truths. For proof of this notice, the following scriptures: Acts 3:11-12, "Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John,

**all the people ran together to them in the porch**, which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people... Acts 2:1,4, "When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance..." Acts 4:31, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were **assembled together** was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." We could go on and on, but this is sufficient to prove our point. People in the New Testament times were taught the word of God, in public gatherings, in an undivided assembly, with men only doing the teaching.

## **II. Sunday schools or Bible classes are wrong because they violate Hebrews 10:25.**

"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together..." The word "together" translates a Greek word *episunago* (verb form) which means, according to J. H. Thayer, "gather together in one place." "To gather together in one place" (George Ricker Berry). The noun form of the word is (*episunagoge*) and according to Berry means "a gathering together in one place." Thus in Hebrews 10:25 we have a command to not forsake the gathering together into one place for the purpose of being exhorted. According to Thayer, Hebrews 10:25 speaks of the religious assembly of Christians. This assembly of Christians has come together into one place. They have not been divided into classes. They have not been segregated. To do so is to violate the passage.

## **III. Sunday schools or Bible classes are wrong because one cannot find:** the name of Sunday schools, the practice of Sunday schools, the idea of Sunday schools or any regulation for Sunday schools anywhere in the Bible. One cannot speak where the Bible speaks and uphold this arrangement for teaching. We are taught to speak "as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11). In addition to the above, one can-

not find, anywhere in the Bible, a congregation using this arrangement for the purpose of teaching the word of God, or any principle in the word of God that justifies such an arrangement. If there is, let someone produce it. If such cannot be found, then let the practice be forsaken.

**IV. Sunday schools or Bible classes are wrong because the church never came together and utilized such an arrangement.** What we do find are churches coming together for edification in Hebrews 10:25, for worship in Acts 20:7, to hear the word of God preached in Acts 11:26, to discuss church problems in Acts 15:31, to discuss foreign efforts in evangelism in Acts 14:26-27, to determine how to best do benevolent work in Acts 6:1-6, for prayer in Acts 4:31, and for discipline in 1Corinthians 5. **Where do we find the church coming together to arrange into classes for the teaching of the Bible?** Friend, we don't. To do so is to practice what is neither commanded, exemplified nor inferred in the word of God.

**V. Sunday schools or Bible classes contradict Paul's ways both in practice and precept.** In 1Corinthians 4:16-17, he wrote "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheous, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I **teach everywhere in every church.**" With reference to public teaching, Paul gathered the church together to deliver the epistle Acts 15:30. "And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves together and taught much people" (Acts 11:26). His practice was consistent "everywhere and in every church." In 1 Thessalonians 5:27, "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." Colossians 4:16, "And when this epistle is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicia." The command was clear: "Read the epistles to the churches," but how? How were the epistles read to the churches? Acts 15:30, When they gathered the multitude together and "they de-

livered the epistle.” The epistle was delivered to an assembled multitude, not a divided or classified one. In Colossians 3:17-23, Paul, by inspiration, delivers instructions to a number of different classes of people. He did not say “divide the church into classes and teach women (wives) in one class, husbands (men) in another class, children in another class,” but his specific instruction was “read this epistle to all the holy brethren.” How? When the church came together so that all may learn and all may hear. Here is an ideal situation for a “class arrangement.” Yet Paul did not use it, nor did anyone else in New Testament times. Authority of such an arrangement has no higher authority than Robert Raikes.

## PATTERN FOR COMMUNION

### **“This Do In Remembrance of Me”**

The above words, spoken by Jesus in Luke 22:19, and repeated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, refer to what we commonly call The Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) or the Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). In Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:21-23, Luke 22:19-22, 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:20-30, we have the Bible pattern for its observance set forth.

Some today are saying that there is no pattern for the observance of this sacred feast. If they are correct, then there can be no possible violation of a pattern. In other words, there would be no wrong way to observe it, the time, manner, frequency of observance and elements used would all be unimportant. One could scripturally partake of the Communion any or every day of the week, use Coca-Cola and steak, and participate in its observance with any frame of mind. On the other hand, if there is a pattern, it must be followed. I believe there is a pattern, and that the Bible gives us that pattern.

With respect to patterns, it is not unusual to hear someone ask, “When is a Bible example (pattern) binding?” The question itself gives evidence that the one asking really doesn’t understand what constitutes a Bible example. A definition of the word “example” will help us here.



Funk and Wagnall define the word as “a thing or person suitable to be used as a model...a sample, specimen, an instance serving to illustrate a rule...” A Bible example is always binding, because it serves to present a model or illustrate a rule. We should point out that there is a vast difference between an incident or mere happenstance that occurs beside the main design and an example. Let me illustrate: in Acts 8:37, we are told “they went down into the water.” This example illustrates the command “to baptize.” It shows us how to baptize. This is what we mean by an example illustrating a rule or command. However, over in Acts 27:38, we are told, “they lighted the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.” This is merely an incident, with no background precept or principle, hence not an example. The Bible is full of incidents that are not examples. It also contains many examples that must be followed. In order to determine whether or not an event is an example or just an incident, we must decide whether it (1) illustrates a rule or precept, or (2) is merely a casual incident that occurs beside the main design. Let us now proceed to point out the Bible pattern for the Communion.

### **THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK**

Acts 20:7, “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.” Not only does the Bible specify the day upon which the Communion was observed, but all the evidence of antiquity concurs in confirming the fact that early disciples came together in assemblies every first day of the week to observe the Lord’s supper.

### **UNLEAVENED BREAD**

The Lord’s supper was instituted during the days of unleavened bread (Mt. 26:17). For seven days, all leaven was put out of their houses (Ex. 12:15). This was the bread Jesus took and of which He said, “This

is My body” (Matthew 26:26). Let us follow His pattern. Leavened bread is bread which has been made to rise by the production of carbon dioxide whether by the addition of chemical agents by man or the addition of yeast with its enzymes acting upon the flour. If we use bread to which yeast has been added, we use something Jesus did not use.

## ONE LOAF

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“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body” (Mt. 26:26). The ASV says He “took a loaf.”

The Greek word is in the singular and its plural form is rendered “loaves” in such passages as Mt. 14:34 and Mk. 6:44, “They did eat of the loaves.” Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread. The bread (loaf) which we break (1 Cor.10:16). “For we are all partakers of that one bread (loaf).” (1 Cor.10:17). “Eat of that one bread (loaf).” (1 Cor. 11:26).

This one loaf is an emblem of the body of Christ. “This is My body,” said Jesus. The copula “is” when used in this way carries the meaning “represents.” Jesus had but one physical body. He took one loaf to be an emblem of this body, “This” said He, not “these.” But He also has a spiritual body, the church. “There is one body.” (Eph. 4:4). “But now are they many members, yet but one body.” (1 Cor. 12:20). In 1 Cor. 10:17, Paul reasons from what is the accepted fact, i.e. that there is but one loaf to be used in the communion, partaken of by the members in the assembly, and proceeds to point out that they are one spiritual body (something they evidently had difficulty understanding): “For we being many are...one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf.” The unity of the one body is demonstrated by all the members of the congregation partaking of the one loaf. If we accept Paul’s conclusion, we must accept the premise upon which he reasoned to

reach that conclusion. If we believe there is one body, we should also believe there is one loaf in the communion.

## **ALL BREAK**

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The breaking of bread in the communion is an act performed by every communicant.

“The bread which WE break,” (1 Cor.10:17). The “we” are the “many” who are members of the one body and who “partake,” (1 Cor. 10:17). “And THEY continued steadfastly...in the breaking of bread,” (Acts 2:42). In Acts 20:7, the “disciples break bread.” Jesus broke bread but He gave it to the disciples and said, “THIS DO.” (Luke 22:19). They did what He had done. The breaking of the loaf is not an ultra special act performed by one person, but rather an act performed by each communicant.

## **ONE CUP**

1. CHRIST TOOK ONE CUP “And He took the cup,” (Mt. 26:27). “And He took the cup,” (Mk. 14:23). “Likewise the cup after supper,” (Luke 22:20). “After the same manner also, He took the cup,” (1 Cor. 11:25). (Many modern speech versions have “a cup”).
2. HE GAVE THANKS FOR ONE CUP “And He took the cup and gave thanks,” (Mt. 26:27). “And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks,” (Mk. 14:23).
3. WE GIVE THANKS FOR ONE CUP “The cup of blessing which we bless,” (1 Cor. 10:16).
4. JESUS GAVE ONE CUP TO THIS DISCIPLES “And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave IT to them,” (Mt. 26:27). “He gave IT to them,” (Mk. 14:23).

5. JESUS CALLED THE CONTENTS OF THE ONE CUP HIS BLOOD “This is My blood,” (Mt. 26:28). “This is My blood,” (Mk. 14:23).

6. JESUS COMMANDED HIS ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES TO DRINK ONE CUP “And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it,” (Mt. 26:27). “Drink all of you out of it,” one translation reads. Another: “drink from it all of you.”

7. THE DISCIPLES OBEYED AND ALL DRANK OF ONE CUP “And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it,” (Mk. 14:23). “They all drank out of it,” another version reads.

8. THE COMMUNICANTS OF AN ASSEMBLY ARE ADMONISHED TO DRINK OF ONE CUP “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,” (1 Cor. 11:28). This is “when ye come together to eat,” verse 33.

Cup is not the name of a liquid but of a solid. Grape juice has never been known by the name “cup.” The repeated use of the word “cup” in the scriptures is not jangling nonsense and meaningless jargon, it is heaven’s language describing what happened on this occasion long ago.

### **BUT HOW DO YOU DRINK A CUP?**

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Someone may ask, “But how do you drink a cup?” The answer is really simple. We drink a cup by drinking what it contains. This common figure which we often use is “metonymy.” When the word cup is so used, it is named to suggest what it contains. The one cup was actually present. The one cup contained the liquid Jesus commanded them to drink. It was a cup containing. Metonymy does not get away from the use of singular and plural. We do not suggest the contents of a plurality of cups by naming one cup. Thus an assembly may “drink this

cup,” (1 Cor. 11:26) by drinking the contents of one literal cup. When we interpret the scriptures grammatically, using the accepted rules of language interpretation, we must conclude that only one literal cup is to be used in the distribution of the fruit of the vine in an assembly of the church for the communion. Often to negate the teaching of the Bible accounts, someone will say, “The cup is the blood.” However, the Bible never says that. Never did Jesus say, “This cup is my blood.” It was the fruit of the vine that represented the blood. The fruit of the vine is what they drank. They drank it from the cup Jesus blessed and gave to them (Mark 14:23). “They all drank from it.” We should do the same.

### **FRUIT OF THE VINE**

The cup Jesus used contained a liquid to be drunk, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine,” (Mt. 26:29). “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine,” (Mk. 14:25).

Is there a liquid, every part of whose substance is produced by the vine, or on a branch in contact with the vine? Yes, there is. “And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, in my dream, behold, a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand,” (Gen. 40:9-11). Here was a liquid, a drink, every part of whose substance was produced on a branch of the vine. Was not this the fruit of the vine, the produce of the vine? Who can deny it?

### **INDIVIDUAL CUPS**

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Many who have never heard of the use of one cup consider it to be a new thing. However, rather than being new, it is as old as the institu-

tion of the Supper itself.

It is actually the individual cups that are new. They came about as a result of a controversy over sanitation. With the discovery of germs, people became conscious of disease transmission. In March of 1894, J.G. Thomas, a Congregationalist preacher, obtained a patent on a tray of individual cups. Their use in churches created a great storm of controversy. There was stiff opposition by Baptist, Methodist and other denominations. The Disciples were affected as well. During the years 1904-1910, J.W. McGarvey led the fight against the use of individual cups in disciple churches. The problem was intensified by the fact that some were using a plurality of cups, yet opposed individual cups. Such a position could not stand. Those advocating the individual cups insisted that if more than one could be used, then individual cups could be used. They were right. Once we leave the Bible pattern and renounce it, we are open for one departure after another. C.E. Holt, of Florence, Ala., was probably the first preacher of the Church to Christ to advocate the use of individual cups. In July of 1911, he wrote, "It has the advantage of being clean." That was the real issue. Sanitation was the moving force behind the adoption of individual cups by churches at that time. Brother Holt was joined by G. Dallas Smith of Fayetteville, Tenn., and G.C. Brewer of Chattanooga, Tenn. All three agreed to speak out on the issue and advocate their use. (G.C. Brewer claimed to be the first to introduce them into the church. In 1915, he was preaching at the Central Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., and according to him, this was the first Church of Christ to ever use them.) There was a problem, however, with David Lipscomb, the editor and publisher of the *Gospel Advocate*. He opposed the individual cups, even writing against their use in his paper. His influence was just too great to overcome. Without his consent, those pushing for their use knew they could not be successful. Finally, however, under pressure he yielded and the individual cups began to be adopted everywhere. The pattern was ignored; division and confusion were the result.

The pattern for the communion is clear, easy to understand and follow. Instead of following modern trends, we should all seek the pattern given us in the New Testament scriptures and follow it without addition or subtraction.

## PLAY ON MISS BERTHA

We believe that it really does matter what the Bible says. So many today view it as an outdated message no longer relevant for our time. Such, however, is just not the case. It contains a living message for today. So many of our current problems find solution in the divine revelation of God's word. It is regrettable that many people don't realize that and thus fail to turn to its teaching. Today, we are going to discuss a theme entitled "Play On Miss Bertha." Our lesson deals with the kind of music to be used in the church. Often, when people enter one of our buildings, the first thing they want to know is, "Where is the piano?" You may wonder why Churches of Christ don't use mechanical instruments of music. In this study, we propose to show you why. We begin today with a historical note of significance. In September of 1873, Joseph Addison Clark moved his young college from Ft. Worth to the pioneer village of Thorp Spring, Texas, to escape the evil influences of a larger town. His two sons, Addison and Randolph, became president and vice-president (respectively) of Add-Ran College. For a time, the college prospered, but was soon caught up in the instrumental music controversy. In February of 1894, B.B. Sanders was conducting a gospel meeting at Thorp Spring. E.M. Douthitt was his song director. These two often worked together and both were known to use the instrument. On February 20, 1894, when time for the evening service arrived, J.A. Clark and his wife took their seats



in the front of the auditorium. Their son, Addison Clark, President, rose to begin the service. At that point, J.A. rose from his seat, walked toward the pulpit and took a piece of paper from his pocket and gave it to his son. It was a petition signed by the elder Clark and over one hundred others asking that the organ not be used on the ground that it was not authorized in the New Testament. Addison read the note, conferred briefly with his brother, Randolph, then announced that he had promised the students that the organ would be used and he could not go back on his word. With that, he turned to the organist and said, "Play on Miss Bertha." (Full name: Bertha Mason). As the organ began to play, J.A. Clark arose with his wife and led the opposition out of the auditorium. At the time, he was a grey bearded seventy-eight year old man who walked with a cane. About one hundred forty people followed him out. Some have estimated that as many as two thirds of the people left. Many were crying as they left. Others who stayed behind were crying as well. From that point, the split widened between the Churches of Christ and the Christian Church. This incident is only one of many like it occurring during the turmoil that arose over the introduction of instrumental music in the assemblies of those claiming to follow Christ. The question of what kind of music God authorizes His people to use in worship to Him has been a point of both discussion and, unfortunately, division for well over one hundred years. As is sometimes the case, people want to do whatever pleases them rather than consult the Bible to find out what God really wants. In reality, it does not matter what I like. What really matters is what God has commanded in His word. So, let us consider: What kind of music does God authorize? What kind of music does He want?

There are, of course, two kinds of music: vocal and instrumental. The authority for vocal or a cappella singing in worship cannot be questioned. It is confirmed by the following New Testament passages: Matthew 26:30, "and when they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives." Acts 16:25, "But about midnight Paul and Si-

las were praying and singing hymns to God..." Romans 15:9, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, for this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name." 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will pray with the spirit and the understanding also, I will sing with the spirit and the understanding also." Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." Hebrews 13:15, "By Him, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips to His name." James 5:13, "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray; is any merry, let him sing psalms." Hebrews 2:12, "Saying I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." These nine verses comprise the sum total of what the New Testament says on the subject of singing. Many think the Bible is full of verses that talk about this subject, but that is not the case. From what we have thus far read, it is clear that the Holy Spirit did not include the instrument when speaking about offering praise to God. The Lord's church is a New Testament institution and the New Testament scriptures reveal what items of worship the Lord wants in it. Since they are silent concerning the use of mechanical instruments in singing praise to God, there is no Bible authority for using them. God's silence rules against their use just as it rules against infant baptism, counting beads, and burning incense. We should never presume to add to the divine pattern. In order to better understand the issue involved here, let us now consider the difference between

## GENERIC AND SPECIFIC COMMANDS

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A generic command is a general command; that is, it is without further specification. For example, in Matthew 28:18 and Mark 16:15-16,

the Lord commanded His disciples to “go preach the gospel to every creature...” “Go” is generic. It is without further specification; that is, in going, one may ride, fly, or walk. God did not specify “how” we are to go. Specific commands, on the other hand, specify what and how we are to do certain things. Generic authority includes, while specific authority excludes. When God commanded Noah to build an ark, He specified the kind of wood that was to be used. “Gopher” wood excluded all other kinds of wood. God did not have to say “don’t use pine, oak, etc.,” for He had already specified the kind of wood He wanted. Generic and specific commands come to us in the form of direct commands, approved examples and necessary inferences. With reference to our current study, the command to sing excludes all other kinds of music. Had God said, “make music,” we would be free to use any kind of music we desired. However, since singing is specified, we must only sing. For this reason, we should be careful to not go beyond what is written. Note carefully the words that are used: “singing,” “speaking” “in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...” If we can understand the meaning of the words “speaking and singing” then we should be able to understand what God wants us to do. These words specify the kind of music God wants in worship. The Bible specifically tells us what to do with the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Paul did not say we are to play them, but that we are to speak and sing them. The word “speak,” according to J.H. Thayer on page 368 of his *Lexicon*, means to “utter or form words with the mouth, to speak.” How are we to do this speaking? The answer: by singing, “to sing or chant,” “the lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful heart.” What does lyrical mean? It comes from the word lyric, which Webster defines as “the words of a song, as distinguished from the music.” Thus we are to speak psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; that is, we are to form words with our mouth, singing the words or lyrics. No instrumental music here. These words also rule out vocal sounds which are not words. The only thing authorized here is speaking (forming) of words with the mouth; that is, to sing. The practice

of some who try to mimic instruments of music by making vocal sounds is as unscriptural as instrumental music. We are also told that these words are to “teach and admonish” one another, i.e. the words must have meaning and be understandable. Making noise or sounds with the vocal chords and mouth, whether humming, making sounds like a drum or violin or bells, etc., is not singing and therefore is not authorized. But now let us look at

## **INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

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A number of arguments have been introduced in an effort to prove instrumental music in worship to God is acceptable. No one to my knowledge, however, has ever argued that we should use instrumental music because the New Testament teaches us that we should. Many believe we can, but none believe it is mandatory. Many claim it is a liberty, but none claim it is a duty. At this time, I want us to consider some of the reasons often given in support of its use.

1. We may use instrumental music in worship to God because it was used under the Law of Moses in Old Testament times. This reasoning opens the door to other practices such as “incense burning,” “polygamy,” and “animal sacrifices.” Can you imagine anyone trying to justify the offering of animals on an altar today? And yet, the same reasoning that would allow instrumental music based on Old Testament usage would also allow animal sacrifices. An argument that proves too much actually proves nothing. Such is the case with this one. We just cannot go to a law that has been abolished and find justification for current practices. The old law is dead, having been nailed to the cross. We cannot claim justification through it nor will we be judged by it. Another reason often given:
2. We may use instrumental music in worship to God because it is not expressly forbidden by the New Testament. This argument

places a premium on the silence of the Scripture. It creates a respect for what the Bible does not say, rather than on what it does say. It is an argument that essentially says we can practice anything that is not expressly forbidden. Such reasoning would have led Noah to use oak instead of gopher wood since God did not expressly forbid the use of oak. This argument would allow one to use beef steak and Coca-Cola on the Lord's table since the scriptures don't specifically forbid their use. Such reasoning is understandably flawed. The Bible does not have to tell us not to do a thing when we are plainly told what to do. Suppose you sent your child to the store to buy milk and bread. When he returned, he had milk, bread and a candy bar. When you asked why he had the candy bar, he replied, "Well, you didn't say I couldn't buy a candy bar." You didn't have to. Your silence on the matter was enough.

3. We may use the instrument in worship because it is only an aid. It is no different than song books, seats and other things that help us in our service to God. This argument is flawed because instrumental music does more than help. It is another kind of music, a kind of music that God failed to command or endorse. There is a difference between an aid and something that is entirely different from what was commanded. Another reason often given:
4. Since we practice instrumental music at home, why can't we practice it in worship to God when we gather for that purpose? There are many things that are morally right, but religiously wrong. Such things as washing feet, washing hands, eating meals, etc., are all morally right. However, they do not bear the sanction of heaven for use in our cooperate worship to God. The same is true of instrumental music. We must remember that it is God who determines what He wants and does not want. We are duty bound to abide by His revealed will as given in the New Testament scriptures, not by what we want or like.

5. Since there will be instruments of music in heaven, why can't use them now? First of all, it is highly speculative to say that there will be instruments of music in heaven. If indeed it could be proven that there will be, it would not justify their use in worship to God today. The same book (The Revelation, a highly symbolical book) that mentions instruments also mentions golden bowls of incense and things of that nature. The same reasoning would mean that we could use these golden bowls in our worship today. To rely on a highly symbolical book as proof for a current practice is to misuse and wrongly apply the scriptures.
  
6. Many argue that the use of the instrument is scriptural because the Greek word "psallo" in Ephesians 5:19 means to accompany the singing with instrumental music. If this argument is true, then everyone must play an instrument. It cannot mean that just one person is to play the instrument while all others sing, nor would that even be an option. Since the command to sing and make melody applies to everyone, whatever it means, everyone must do. The Greek word in question by definition means to "pluck the hair, twang the bowstring, twitch a carpenter's line, touch the chords of a musical instrument, i.e. to make instrumental music, to touch the chords of the human heart, i.e. to sing, to celebrate with human praise." Since this word has had several different meanings, we must determine from the context what it means in Ephesians 5:19. The melody in this passage is to be made with the heart ("make melody in the heart"); hence, it logically follows that the word "psallo" is used here of singing. That is we "sing and make melody in our heart," not on an instrument of music. All the arguments used in favor of the instrument fall short. They do not give divine justification for the practice. One might conclude, however, that since most religious bodies of our day employ the use of instrumental music in their services, it has always been an accepted practice. Such, however, is not the case. In fact, its use was rejected by many of the early preachers who were

a part of these denominations. Note the following quotations: John Calvin (Presbyterian), the father of Calvinism, said, “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of the shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews.” John Wesley (Methodist), “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen.” Adam Clarke (Methodist), “Music, as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.” Charles Spurgeon, recognized as the greatest Baptist preacher that ever lived, preached for twenty years to thousands of people weekly in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle in London, England, but did not have musical instruments in worship. Now, the fact that these men were opposed to the use of mechanical instruments of music does not make its use wrong in worship to God today. However, their opposition does show that in ages past the instrument was opposed on the grounds that the Bible did not teach or authorize it in any way. The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God are of human rather than Divine origin.

## WOMEN TEACHERS

### WHERE AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MAY THEY TEACH?

The involvement of women in teaching and leadership situations is fast becoming one of paramount discussion among people of all religious persuasions. The Southern Baptists are divided over the subject of women Pastors. The Catholics debate the issue of women Priests. Many Churches of Christ differ in their views as to exactly where, how, and with what authority women may teach. What saith the scriptures? The only way to rightly answer the questions being asked and address the situations arising is to go to the Bible and determine what it has to say on this important subject. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 teaches that God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man the head of woman. This divine order cannot be ignored or rejected regardless of what popular opinion might decree, nor can we overlook it when making determinations about women in teaching situations. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church..." (Eph. 5:27). "Let the women learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence," (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Two things are forbidden by Paul in this verse: (1) a woman may not teach, and (2) she may not have dominion over a man. The word "teach," used by Paul means, according to J.H. Thayer, "to hold discourse with



others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses.” Hence, there are times when a woman is forbidden from holding discourse with others in order to instruct them and from delivering didactic discourses. She obviously may not deliver a didactic discourse in the assembly of the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), on a street corner, over television or radio, or in a situation parallel to Paul’s teaching in Acts 24 before Felix or Acts 26 before Agrippa. Why? Because this passage forbids it. In addition, she may not have dominion over a man, which would include, but is not limited to, the area of teaching. Paul gives as reason for his prohibition: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Does this mean that a woman may not teach anywhere or under any circumstances? Certainly not, for the scriptures give us some examples of her teaching as well as some inferences where she must have taught. In Acts 18:26, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos “aside” or “unto themselves” and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly. We do not know how much Priscilla participated in the teaching process. It is, however, very doubtful that she took the lead, since her husband was present. At any rate, this was a private, house to house, informal type situation. Invitations were not sent to people of the congregation, or to certain ones in surrounding congregations, inviting them to attend the session. I am amazed when I hear of people arranging teaching situations where women take the lead, where people (sometimes from across the brotherhood) are invited and then call this a “private” situation. Some seem to have the idea that as long as we don’t announce a thing at a church service, it is automatically private. Calling something private does not make it so, and brethren need to be careful in this area. For years, the Sunday school advocates couldn’t decide whether the classes they have were “public” or “private.” When pressed, they would say that they were announced to the public, but limited to only the ones who fit in a particular classification, hence, private or sequestered. They obviously had a problem, but no more so than those that I have heard from

lately who try to justify what is obviously public by calling it private. In Acts 21, we have the case of Philip who had four daughters that prophesied. We know that these daughters could not have done their teaching publicly or in the church. Such would have been a violation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Hence, their teaching was a private, house to house, individual, informal type of teaching, parallel to that of Priscilla in Acts 18. In 2 Timothy 1:5, we read, "...when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in you also." The inference here is that both Lois and Eunice had taught their children. Parents, both fathers and mothers, should teach their children (Ephesians 6:1-2). Here again, however, we have women teaching as individuals in the home setting. In Titus 2:3-4, older women are described as "teachers of good things," and are told to "admonish the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children," etc. The word "teachers" is from a word translated by Berry to mean "teachers of what is right." Robertson, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, says, "Not only by discourse at home, as Chrys. explains, but by example." The word translated "admonish" is rendered by Berry "that they may school" and Robertson renders it "train." Thayer says it means "...to restore one to his senses; to moderate, control, curb, discipline; to hold on to his duty, to exhort to admonish earnestly." Hence, older women are to "at home, in a private house to house, domestic type situation" instruct and train younger women in these matters. They school them by way of example and on-going training. Such training and instruction is not the type that takes place in a Sunday school class or class type setting, but rather is an ongoing process, i.e. a matter of training. From these scriptures we see that women have their place as teachers in domestic, house to house type situations. Such teaching is always private, individual and informal. There is no example of a woman gathering a group together and assuming the role of "instructor" or "teacher" over them. If so, where is it? Let us stay with what is revealed.

## IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?

This morning, I want to talk to you about one of the most important subjects we can consider. Our study is titled, "Is The Young Man Safe?" The thought is taken from 2 Samuel 18:28-33. It reads as follows: "So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, 'All is well.' Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king and said, 'Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.' The king said, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' Ahimaaz answered, 'When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about.' And the king said, 'Turn aside and stand here.' So he turned aside and stood still. Just then, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, 'There is good news, my lord and king. For the Lord has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you.' And the king said to the Cushite, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' So the Cushite answered, 'May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man.' Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said thus: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, if only I had died in your place, O Absalom my son, my son.'" These are the words of a heartbroken father. David was not the last to mourn his son or daughter. Millions have done the same. This world in which we live is a very wicked and unsafe place. Every day, thou-

sands of murders, rapes, robberies, and unspeakable crimes against our children occur. Every parent's nightmare is to receive word of their child's death or injury. I ask you, "Are our young people safe?" The answer is simple and straightforward: many of them are not. No soldier on the battlefield, no traveler on dark mountains, no ship on a tempestuous sea, is exposed to greater peril than a young man. Safe from what? From himself, his own heart. Inexperience, susceptibility to impressions, youthful lusts, love of pleasure, excitement, name and fame, impatience of control, self-confidence, presumption, and false friends. After David reached the height of the glory of his power, he fell on evil days, suffering much anxiety and remorse. He fell into sin and suffered the inevitable consequences. Sin is destructive in the lives of the mighty as well as the humble. It has no respect of persons, attacking the prince as quickly as the pauper. David lived to see many dark days as a result of his sin. He later lamented in Psa. 51:3, "My sin is ever before me." In later years, his son Amnon committed fornication with his sister, Tamara, and was killed by his brother Absalom. Then Absalom, fearing his father, fled; but David mourned for his return and when he came back, granted him the job of settling controversies among his subjects. The Bible says that "by flattery he stole the people's hearts," (2 Sam. 15:6). After turning their minds from David, he usurped his father's throne until David had to flee to the land of Gilled, where a battle was fought between his army and that of Absalom. The king warned the men not to harm his son; but as the conflict raged, Absalom's head was caught in an oak as he rode underneath trying to escape and he was suspended between heaven and earth. Upon learning this, Joab took darts and thrust them through the heart of Absalom until he died. Messengers were sent to David to bring news of the victory, but the only question was: "Is the young man Absalom safe? When told what happened, David mourned, "Oh my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son!" The king was deeply moved-- (Hebrew: word properly refers to agitation of body.). It would appear

that a violent trembling seized the king, and, rising he went up to the guard chamber over the two gates, that he might give free course to his lamentation. What a sight, as this great king slowly made his way up the stairs, his body trembling, as he uttered these words of intense sorrow. I feel this question is fitting, and one we should all be asking: Is the young man safe?

First of all I ask, Is The Young Man Physically Safe? It seems almost foolish to ask such a question. Most of us would spend the last penny we had to insure that our children are physically safe. We would appeal to law enforcement officials to see that they are safe. Yet we are reminded of multiple stories that tragically remind us that many of our children are not physically safe. You remember the woman in South Carolina who drove her car into a lake, allowing her children to drown. Or the woman in Houston, Texas, who methodically drowned her five children one by one in the bath tub of her home. Then there was the story of the woman and man who locked a child in a closet for four years in filth, while ill clad and fed. And we ask, "How could that happen?" But it does, and unfortunately, it happens more than we want to admit. Long ago in Old Testament times, Reuben, Joseph's brother, rebuked his brothers for their ill treatment of Joseph when he said, "Spake I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also, his blood is required." (Gen. 42:22).

Some religious people sin against their children by refusing to get them medical treatment. Some are misled who believe in miracles and healing rather than seeking the care and advice of a doctor. They reason that the use of a doctor manifests a lack of faith in God. Some have actually allowed their children to die rather than seek medical attention. Some religious sects teach that a blood transfusion is a violation of the Bible prohibition against eating blood (Acts 15:29). Taking a blood transfusion is no more eating blood than having a kidney transplant is eating a kidney. On some occasions, the chil-

dren have died because of this. If we can agree that depriving a child of medical treatment is a sin against the child, we should have no trouble seeing that hiring a doctor to kill an unborn baby is a sin against that unborn child. In America, over 1.5 million babies a year are killed by parents who are without natural affection. Romans. 1:31. How shameful we should feel over this. It amazes me that some adults are outraged when some newborn baby is snatched from its mother's arms and killed. Yet that same person thinks nothing about a baby being snatched from its mother's womb and destroyed. We are sinning against our children when that takes place. We will pay for that before God almighty. Some parents sin against their children by physically abusing them. Small children are crushed or thrown to the floor by parents in uncontrolled anger. Little bodies are beaten and bruised. These precious children, helpless to defend themselves, are often beaten until they die. What a shame. Some children are even used to satisfy perverted sexual urges. Men of the cloth on occasion have ruined the lives of countless young boys to satisfy their misguided desires. Shame on these men and on the organization that allows them to continue to serve. Then there are those live in lovers and stepfathers who are sometimes responsible for this type of abuse. They take a small child and shake or beat the little one until it dies or is permanently damaged. Are our children physically safe? Do we teach them that there are diseases with power to destroy their bodies and befoul their minds? Solomon said in Prov. 1:8, "My son hear the instruction of your father and forsake not the law of thy mother." I ask you candidly, are our young people physically safe when they are exposed to popular smoking ads, with the guarantee that with each puff they are becoming more popular and socially acceptable and without the danger of ruining their health? Smoking is responsible for 85% of all lung cancer deaths, 30-40% of deaths from diseases of the heart and blood vessels, and 80-90% of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Smokers have a 70% higher death rate than non-smokers. It has been estimated that cigarette smoking is

annually responsible for 20% of all American deaths (400,000).

That means more deaths annually from smoking than from AIDS, heroin, crack, cocaine, alcohol, fire, and car accidents combined. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are to glorify God in our body and spirit, (1 Cor. 6:19-20). ARE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE? In a recent year in Texas, there was enough cans of beer drunk to tower one hundred eighty four miles into the air if placed on top of each other. Is the young man safe from the blight of drinking? Not to mention those killed by drunk drivers. No wonder Paul warned Christians in Eph. 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess..." Ladies and gentlemen, our young men and women are not safe. We lose thousands every year to the excesses we have just mentioned. But we also ask

Is The Young Man Morally Safe? The young man is not morally safe unless he is properly guarded. It is not in a young man to "direct his own steps." Young people often do things without counting the cost. They fail to weigh the consequences before they act. It is the duty of parents to guard vigilantly the lives of their young until the time when they can, with soberness, shape properly their own destinies. Solomon warns in Prov. 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." If you leave the mind of a young person alone and without training in this world, it will soon be occupied and crowded with the wrong ideas. There are many sources from which they may receive the wrong kind of training: the press, radio, TV, and many movies. From these, they may receive wrong impressions regarding morality and marriage that run counter to the Christian ideal. Were they to believe what comes out of Hollywood, they would have a gross disregard for the Bible's teaching on marriage, divorce, immorality, and perverted lifestyles. In addition, unwholesome recreation awaits around every corner.

Young people should be taught to keep their bodies for that relation-

ship that God recognizes and approves. No one is ever better for tasting the poison of sin. Dissipation will coarsen, not sweeten, your life. A destroyed character is hard to rebuild. “No” may well be the most important word a young person learns. Paul warned Timothy and the young of his day, “Keep thyself pure” 1 Tim.5:22. That is still good advise even today.

Live so that no man can “despise thy youth.” 1 Tim. 4:12. The word despise means “to look down upon or think slightly of.” Young people who “think slightly” of their reputation, character, purity and honesty make a grave mistake that will haunt them for the rest of their lives. Every sexual relationship before or outside of marriage is wrong. Paul warns us that the fornicator “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

1 Cor. 6:9. But we also ask, Is The Young Man Spiritually Safe? From the text it appears that David was concerned about Absalom’s everlasting state. He reacts differently to this death than the one of the child that was born as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. When that child died, he arose, washed his face, took nourishment, and asked, “Can I bring him back again?” Knowing that he could not, he resolved to so live that someday he could go and be with him. But regarding Absalom, he wailed with such sorrow that no human voice could comfort. Why, if not over his concern for Absalom’s spiritual state. He knew that this child had lived in rebellion to both the kingdom of God and Israel. It is this thought that brings the timeliness of this question to our attention: Is the young man spiritually safe?

Some parents, unfortunately, encourage their children in doing those things that are detrimental to soul growth and development. Society calls making her demands, and the “young man” is encouraged in a direction that puts him one step higher on the ladder of social acceptability, while taking him one step farther away from God and the church. Parents have a job of helping their children select their



associates, their recreation, their literature, and everything else that tends to mold them into what they will be in life. This training can be done through instruction, firmly establishing them in the truth and solidly against sectarian error. They must be trained to know God, Christ and the Bible. In Deut. 4:9, we read, "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things our eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and grandchildren." Young people need to put their talents to work for the Lord, knowing they are losing the best years of their life if it is spent otherwise. The Bible teaches, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth...and walk in the ways of thine heart and in sight of thine eyes, but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment; therefore put away evil from thy flesh," (Eccl. 11:9). You cannot save your youth. It is being used up. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," (Lam. 3:27). In other words, children need to be taught and trained. The right kind of experience is a great teacher. We also teach our children by being examples to them. The best way to train a child is to train yourself, for what you are, he will be. If your hands are morally dirty, his life will be made dirty by the handling that he gets. Precept may point the way, but it is silent continuous example conveyed through action that impresses youth most. The young man is not safe if you put the church second. He is not safe if you allow things to come between you and your duty. He is not safe if you are too busy to serve the Lord or if your life is a sham or one of hypocrisy. Proper discipline is necessary for children to learn and become the kind of adults we want them to be. The Old Testament is very explicit about discipline of children. Solomon wrote the following rules: Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten your child while there is hope." Again Proverbs 23:13, "Do not withhold correction from a child." And, finally, Proverbs 29:15, "...a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Eli was condemned for his conduct toward his children because he failed to restrain his sons. 1 Samuel 3:13, "For I have told him that I will judge

his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.” Many parents today make the same mistake. One time, a young man had a placard on his dormitory wall at college. It read: “I am willing to be third. Christ is always first; others second; I am willing to be third.” What a wonderful motto. Undoubtedly, this young man had received good training and teaching. May this question, “Is the young man safe?” ring in our ears until we resolve in our hearts to do something about it. May we realize there can be no safety for us as long as there is none for our youth. If we lose our children, we lose everything. Unfortunately, many today really ignore this important question. Young people are often allowed to “raise themselves” without guidance or care. Such may appear to be all right, but time will ultimately prove that to be wrong.

## MEN WHO SHOULD NOT PREACH

*Romans 10:12-15*

“I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables,” (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

It would be difficult to find a better statement of the duties of a preacher than this. It is both complete and classic. Nor could one be found who was better qualified to give such a serious charge than Paul himself. This great apostle to the gentile world had endured hardness as a good soldier. He sought to plant the cause in places where the enemy was securely entrenched: Corinth, the site of the worship of Aphrodite; Ephesus, home of the temple of the great goddess Diana (Acts 19:35); and Athens, the stronghold of Greek culture and idolatry (Acts 17). Paul was a man of vast learning, a man divinely inspired, who felt a mighty obligation to preach. “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,” (1 Cor. 9:16).

But all men should not preach. Some are not qualified or equipped for the task. Who is it that should not preach?

I. Men who don't know or can't make up their mind about preaching should not preach.

Men who say, "I think I might want to preach," obviously express a doubt. There can be no doubt. If one is not compelled to preach, if one is reluctant to leave home, family, funds, etc., he should not preach. Remember, Paul said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Preaching is not about having a good time. It's not about "big" meetings or "young speakers or young people's meetings." Preaching is about winning the lost, often in far away places, lonely places, all alone. 2 Tim. 2:3, "You therefore must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," Paul wrote. Preaching is about planting churches and bringing them to maturity. If you're only interested in being with others, being a part of a larger crowd, preaching is not for you. Do yourself and the church a favor, stay at home, get a job, become a leader in the church, but don't preach.

Men who have to preach will preach regardless. They will preach even if they are not supported to do so. They may, at times, "make tents" or follow a profession, but they will preach. They won't wait to be called, they will "go" in whatever way they can, but they will preach.

II. Men who disgrace the pulpit, either by life, language, or personal antics, should not preach. Some great men have used the pulpit for its intended purpose, among them Jesus, Paul, Peter, Timothy, and many others. Some great minds have used it to expound on thrilling, majestic themes like A. Campbell, Walter Scott, Moses Lard, whose description of the returning prodigal was so vivid that often those in the audience would look toward the back door, expecting the boy to appear at any moment, and J.W. McGarvey. John T. Johnson was a great exhorter, and it was often said that when he finished his exhortation not a sinner would be left in the audience. All had come

forward to confess Christ.

The sanctity of the pulpit is destroyed by jokesters, actors who lie flat on the floor while speaking, standing on the Lord's Table, purely for the purpose of some sensational outcome, or men who use provocative language to shock the audience. All such actions disgrace the pulpit and the men who use them. The pulpit exists for the publication and announcement of sublime themes, delivered with grace and force. 1 Tim. 4:1-2, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, preach the word..." Preaching is serious business.

III. Men who seek change for the sake of change should not preach.

Some want to revolutionize, remake, and fashion the church after sectarian and denominational patterns. If you must preach Calvinism, if you must flirt with digression, if you must justify questionable lifestyles, if you feel compelled to "live life on the edge" and preach the same way, then please don't preach. Change agents, for the sake of change, are not a blessing to the church, they are a hindrance. If your idea of preaching is to keep the church in turmoil, to challenge every time-honored scriptural practice and replace it with something questionable, then you don't belong in the pulpit. Revolutionary change is currently being fostered by some. The architects of the change movement plainly state that they are discontent with the current and past practices of the church. Their goal is to restructure the church. Brethren need to be aware and send all such men back home from whence they came.

IV. Men who will not preach "the whole counsel of God" should not preach.

Acts 20:26-27, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." Sin must be condemned and God's truth upheld. Regardless of how much it hurts, the preacher must deliver the

message as it is written. Jeremiah did and was thrown into prison. John did and was beheaded. Paul did and was thrown in prison and even put to death. The man who refuses to do so should not preach.

Some say we've lost the battle on modesty or the Bible teaching on women wearing long, uncut hair. Why? Because we've quit preaching on it, that's why. The same is true of doctrinal points. Seldom do we hear sermons on why Sunday schools, instrumental music, etc., are additions to the teaching of the scriptures. What happens as a result is that people begin to question what is wrong with these practices. When the younger generation is not sufficiently taught, Bible principles and scriptural teaching will soon fall by the wayside only to be replaced by what is currently popular. H. Leo Boles wrote in 1932, "No hypocrite can preach the truth of God with the power and persuasion that should ever accompany the preaching of the gospel. No preacher can preach the gospel as it should be preached unless he preaches because his heart is in the work, and not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind." If churches today are to continue their mission, they must be taught...by preachers who are clothed with the humility of Christ and have the courage of their convictions. All the churches should be praying that God will give us God-fearing, truth-loving, earnest, faithful men for preachers and teachers of His word.

## THE VOICE OF THE BROTHERHOOD

What is the brotherhood and how does it speak? This question, though controversial, deserves a Bible answer. The scriptures plainly teach that there is a brotherhood, for we are commanded to “love the brotherhood,” (1 Peter 2:17). In a similar vein, Paul commanded, “Do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith,” (Gal. 6:10). From these and other passages, it seems evident that Christians are bound together by a tie that does not bind them to other men. We are to have an affection for the entire brotherhood of Christians, that is, the entire body of believers worldwide. But the question is, “How does this worldwide body speak?” What is its voice? How does it function? Often we hear such phrases as “the brotherhood has spoken,” or “the brotherhood will not accept that,” “that is our brotherhood paper,” or “you should check out our brotherhood website.” In reality, I don’t believe there is any such thing as a brotherhood paper, website, not even a brotherhood church directory. Now, I think I know what people mean when they say that; however, the idea is neither realistic nor scriptural. Anyone can have a religious paper, but no paper represents the thinking or beliefs of the entire body of believers. Any person can have a website; in fact, many do, but none of them represent the thinking or work of the entire brotherhood. Church directories are very helpful. However, none of them contain all the congregations who serve the Lord worldwide. In

fact, it is possible that some who really belong to the Lord have been omitted and some who have been included do not measure up to the divine standard.

If the brotherhood doesn't speak through these avenues, then how does it speak? The truth is the brotherhood has no voice. The church in its universal sense is only a spiritual relationship and not an organization. The church universal has no earthly headquarters, no earthly head, no ruling body of men (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Timothy 3:15). On the other hand, the local church is not only a relationship, but an organic body as well, and this is the only organic form or existence Christ has given His church on earth (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23). In other words, the Bible recognizes no organization larger than the local church. Hence, the only way for the church to speak or its voice to be heard is through local churches.

Whatever problems may arise and whatever solutions we may use in an effort to settle them cannot in any way violate the scriptural teaching about the basic organization of the New Testament church. That means we cannot create an organization larger than the local church to deal with these problems. A few years ago when a preacher for the Assemblies of God denomination got into moral difficulties, he was called before the "general council" of the church and stripped of his right to preach. They took away his credentials. The Church of Christ has no "general council." If a gospel preacher gets out of line either morally or by preaching false doctrine and thereby disrupts churches, the congregation to which he belongs is responsible for disciplining him. If they fail to do so, then each congregation as an independent organic body has to deal with this individual in a scriptural way in order to protect the flock of God in that place. There is, however, no brotherhood "council" or "organization" for dealing with such matters. In the same way, if a congregation oversteps the limits of Bible teaching and practices those things not authorized, when such becomes known, other congregations need warn their own members



of the unscriptural practices of the wayward church. If such were to happen, would all churches do as they should? Probably not. As an individual, I cannot control what other individuals or churches do. I can only control what I do and, as an individual, have a say in what the congregation to which I belong does. We must always remember, however, that in all our dealings both individually and collectively, we must manifest the spirit of Christ. We never have the right to misrepresent any person or church. We never have the right to be mean-spirited or vindictive. We must deal honestly, fairly, and objectively with all men.

In some situations, a congregation may call a group of men to come and examine their particular situation. This often occurs when a division has taken place. The men who are called go and examine the evidence presented and usually make some kind of statement as to how they view the situation. Is this a scriptural procedure? Do these men represent some type of organizational function unknown to the scriptures or do they only represent an effort on the part of individuals to help in the resolution of a difficult matter? In Acts 15, we have a case where Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders in order to resolve a problem that had arisen over circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses. After much discussion, the meeting there resulted in a letter being sent and read to the church in Antioch. The letter was joyfully received and its recommendations accepted. Even though some of the men involved in this matter were inspired, the incident itself emphasizes that through collective study and consultation it is possible to resolve very difficult problems. I personally see nothing wrong with a congregation asking faithful, objective brethren for help in the assessment or resolution of difficult situations. However, we must remember that men today are not inspired. Because of this, there is no guarantee that the decisions reached will be the correct. Church autonomy therefore demands that each church decide for itself what they believe to be right, based on the facts of the case and the teaching of God's word.

Some argue that church autonomy allows them to make their own decisions and that no church has a right to tell them what they can or cannot do. While it is true that we must respect the autonomy of another congregation, we must also remember that autonomy is a two way street. Other churches have the right to determine for themselves if they feel a church has gone too far and stepped out of line. For example, suppose a church begins to teach that one is saved by grace alone and that baptism is not necessary for salvation. When challenged they claim that autonomy gives them the right to teach what they view as being right. Does this mean that other churches must accept their teaching? Does it mean they cannot be challenged for teaching such an idea? Certainly not. They not only can, but should be opposed. When they are opposed that doesn't mean those opposing have violated the autonomy of the teaching church. The fact that each church is independent of all others so far as their government is concerned gives no church the right to teach and disseminate that which is contrary to the scriptures. Autonomy was never intended to allow or protect any church when they do that which is wrong. When differences arise between individuals and/or churches, often information intended to accurately portray the situation becomes misinformation as it passes from one person to another. This is regrettable. Every situation deserves to be correctly represented. A failure to do so greatly hinders the possibility of resolution. May God help us to approach all such problems in the spirit of Christ, in a way that respects the organizational structure God has given the church, and at the same time seeks to save those who may have disobeyed the Lord.

## THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

Our study at this time involves one of the most famous battles ever mentioned in scripture, the battle of Armageddon. What is it? When will it be fought, and where? These are questions that deserve a Bible answer and we propose to do that at this time. First of all, we want to read from Revelations 16:13-16. The scripture says, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." In these verses we have a battle described as "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," with a gathering in a place called "Armageddon." What does this mean or signify? There are many theories about it, and unfortunately most of them are totally wrong. The battle of Armageddon is one of the principal tenets of dispensational pre-millennialism. The dispensationalist sees it as a great and terrible conflict, a bloody holocaust such as has never been seen before. The battle, according to this theory, is to happen in our time, and will precede the visible coming of Christ. Some definitions are in order to help us better understand

both what the Bible teaches and what some people think it teaches.

Pre-millennialism: This theory teaches that Christ will return to earth before beginning a 1000 year reign from Jerusalem. The doctrine originated in the late second century and gradually disappeared in the third, until its revival in relatively modern times.

Dispensationalism: Teaches that God created the world in 6 days and on the 7th he rested, so all history is divided into 7 dispensations, the final one being the millennium.

Dispensationalism was crystallized by John N. Darby (1800-1882) and popularized by C. I. Scofield in the notes of the Scofield Bible. The chronological development, according to the theory, is as follows:

1. Christ came to earth to set up His kingdom. But he was surprisingly rejected by the Jews, and as an afterthought, set up the Church instead.
2. Since returning to heaven, the bridegroom has “tarried” but “signs” (especially those in Matthew 24) indicate his return is imminent. (Mt. 24 is misunderstood by many and horribly misrepresented by them when they overlook the fact that the majority of the chapter is in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD).
3. The “first stage” of His coming will be “quiet” and “invisible” at which time the “living righteous” will be raptured, or caught away, and the dead saints resurrected.
4. This begins a seven-year “tribulation” period. During the first half of the period, Solomon’s temple will be rebuilt and the sacrifices of the Jewish law will be reactivated.

During the last half of the period, a bloody conflict will ensue which will be consummated by the battle of Armageddon.

5. Christ then, after the Armageddon victory, will begin his 1000 year reign on David's throne in Jerusalem, after which the wicked dead are raised. Then the judgment and eternity begins.

Let us now review these points one at a time.

1. The rejection of Christ is no surprise. Long before the event, prophecies had foretold its reality (Psalms 118:22). "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." (Jesus applies the prophecy to himself in Mt. 21:42). Christ did establish the kingdom. In John 3:5, we read, "Unless one is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Colossians 1:13 "He has delivered from power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Rev. 1:9, "I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation and kingdom." John was in the kingdom, the kingdom had come. The Church was no accident: Jesus promised to build it in Mt. 16:18. It was a part of God's eternal plan according to Eph. 3:10.

2. Christ did not know the time of his coming. Hence, there could be no signs, Mt. 24:36. There is nothing in the word of God to indicate that Christ's return is imminent.

3. The coming of Christ will be both "visible" and "audible" according to 2 Thess. 1:7 "...Lord Jesus revealed (visible) from heaven..." 1 Thess. 4:16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout (audible), with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God..." Nothing silent about this. Both the wicked and righteous will be raised at the same time according to John 5:28-29. "The hour is coming when all they that are in their graves will hear his voice and come forth..." No thousand year separation here.

4. Nowhere in the Bible is "tribulation" used in connection with a seven year period at the end of the age. The Law of Moses was "nailed to the cross." Col. 2:14. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was contrary to us taking it out of the way nailing it to the

cross.” To reactivate the animal sacrifices would be foolish in the light of Christ’s sacrifice. In Heb. 10:10, we are told that he “died once for all...”

5. The carnal nature of dispensationalism’s Armageddon is opposed to the spiritual nature of NT conflict. In 2 Cor. 10:4, Paul taught that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal...” The people of God do not fight carnal battles.

There is no evidence in the Bible that there will ever be a 1000 year reign by Christ upon the earth. Hal Lindsey, a proponent of Dispensational Pre-millennialism, in his book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, says that the political indications suggest that likely Israel will soon be invaded by a confederation of “Arab-African forces headed by Egypt. When this happens, Russia and her allies will use such as an occasion to invade and conquer (for a short time) the Middle East. Subsequently, the Russians learn of the progressive mobilization of Oriental forces (under Red China) and Western European forces (under the Anti-Christ, a fuehrer-like dictator). She will prepare to fight but will be completely destroyed (probably in a nuclear attack) by Western Europe (which is supposed to be the revived Roman Empire). Accordingly, this sets the stage for the final climactic battle of Armageddon: the combined forces of the Western civilization under the leadership of the Roman dictator and the vast hordes of the Orient probably under the Red Chinese war machine. This mighty battle between the Oriental forces (with 200 million soldiers) and the armies of the Anti-Christ will occur “with the vortex centered at the Valley of Megiddo.” He further speculates that, “So many will be killed that blood will stand to the horses’ bridles for a total distance of 200 miles northward and southward of Jerusalem.” Lindsey claims that the war will spread over all the earth, destroying cities like London, Paris, New York, etc. Finally, as the battle reaches its awful climax and it appears that all life will be destroyed on earth, in this very moment Christ will come and save man from self-extinction.

This book was written years ago. I don't know how soon Mr. Lindsey thinks soon is, but it is obvious that a number of years have passed since the predictions by him and they have not come to pass. Beware of false prophets.

In order to understand the book of Revelation, one must recognize the nature and design of the book. The word Armageddon is translated from the Hebrew "Har-Magedon" found only once in the Bible (Rev. 16:16). One would think from all the fanfare and talk about a battle of Armageddon that the word appears frequently on the Sacred page, but such is not the case. In order for us to determine the meaning of the word, we need to look at the character and purpose of the book of Revelation. (1) Revelation is highly symbolical (2) Christ "signified" the message by the angel unto John. Rev. 1:1 3. Why did the Lord choose symbols to be vehicles of these truths? There is, we believe, a twofold purpose: (1) the symbols were designed to reveal, in a dramatic way, truths to those who were initiated in the significance of word pictures (2) at the same time, these truths could be concealed from those who would abuse them if the message were clearly understood.

This symbolic terminology, also called apocalyptic language, was employed by inspired writers to convey messages of hope to God's people in time of danger. Any view of the book of Revelation that fails to recognize its highly symbolic nature, that seeks to literalize its images, is doomed to absolute failure. What then is Armageddon? Let us summarize point by point what is taught in the text:

1. Revelation chapter 16 records the pouring out of 7 bowls of God's wrath into the earth.
2. The bowls are in the form of plagues, i.e. (sores, blood, fire, frogs, etc.)
3. They point us to God's judgment against the dragon, the beast, and

their associates.

4. In connection with the 6th bowl, John writes in verses 13-16, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."

5. Obviously there are figures employed here. John is not saying that literal frogs will come out of literal mouths of literal creatures to do battle on the literal plain of Megiddo.

6. The plain of Megiddo is approximately 20 miles long and 14 miles wide.

This is much too small to accommodate a battle of the magnitude (hundreds of millions of soldiers) demanded by the pre-millennial view.

7. What is Har-Megedon? Literally it means "the hill of Megiddo." The Bible speaks of "Megiddo and its three heights" in Joshua 17:11, "Megiddo and its towns" Judges 1:27, "the waters of Megiddo" Judges 5:19, and "the valley of Megiddo" in 2 Chronicles 35:22. No mention, however, is made of the Mount of Megiddo. In this general area several significant battles were fought in Old Testament times: Deborah and Barak overthrew the kings of Canaan, Judges 5:19. In this valley, Gideon's three hundred men defeated the Midianites, Judges 6:33. Saul defeated by Philistines, 1 Sam.31:8. Ahaziah died of Jehu's arrows, 2 Kings 9:27. Pharaoh-Necho overthrew Josiah, 2 Kings 23:29-30. In view of these battles of historical significance, we conclude that John used the word symbolically to describe a great decisive spiritual



battle. The old battlefield becomes the symbol of this struggle. It is raised in meaning. It is a type, not a locality. This battle was between the army of Satan and the forces of God. It was a spiritual struggle, not a carnal one. A battle which would determine the fate of each side involved. Contextually, the battle was fought and won by the Lord in the complete defeat of the Roman Empire and god-Caesar paganism behind which Rome threw its total power and the results are described in Revelation 19:11-21. Verse 11, "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And He who sat on him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." The battle of that great day of God Almighty, first introduced in 16:12-16, portrayed the army of Satan as led by three devilish spirits that looked like frogs. Also on the devil's side were the beast, the pagan religion of the false prophet and those who displayed the mark of the beast. With such opposition, how could the people of God ever hope to win? This verse tells us that they are led by one mightier than all the combined forces of Satan. Christ, our Leader and Savior, on a white horse, coming in righteousness to judge and make war. Verse 14 says that He is followed by spiritual armies. "And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses." "Armies of heaven on white horses." Remember that these are not carnal armies. Verse 15: the power of judgment is His word. "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nation. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. He executes God's wrath against the nations as He treads out the wine press. Verse 17 declares that so certain is the victory of Christ over the false prophet and beast that an angel summons the birds of prey to come to the supper of the great God. "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God.' " Verse 19 depicts the impending battle, but no description of it is given. It is not a prolonged conflict. The forces of

evil are simply outclassed. “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” Verse 20 says, “The beast was taken.” “Then the beast was captured and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” They were no match for the Divine warrior. Verse 21, “the rest,” i.e. the proud, arrogant armies of the beast are now brought to nothing. “And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” The kingdom of God which Rome attempted to destroy still stands. Here, we have the only description inspiration has given us of the “battle of Armageddon.” We must remember that the whole thrust of the Apocalypse is to assure God’s people of that day, of the certainty of this victory, and to keep them from succumbing to the pressures of emperor worship. In Revelation 19:21, we are assured the Roman power and the paganism which supported it are now destroyed forever. In this defeat and destruction, the destiny of all such powers that should ever arise to fight against God and His Kingdom are revealed. No person, no nation, no movement can successfully oppose God and be successful. While the specific reference here was to a battle fought long ago, this is not to say that similar engagements of evil versus righteousness have not continued to occur. Satan has not ceased to exist. He continues to wage battle against the purposes of God. But this is God’s guarantee of victory to the saints who lived then and to all who would come after them, even until the end of time. For anyone today to look for a physical military battle between human armies to be fought in northern Palestine at some future date is completely without scriptural support and foreign to the spirit and purpose of Revelation.

(For further information the reader is encouraged to read the comments of Homer Hailey in his commentary on Revelation or a ser-

mon by Wayne Jackson titled *The Battle of Armageddon*.)

## **GAMBLING**

*Acts 5:24-29*

When government or its agents overstep the authority or right that God gave them, they sin.

If a Christian receives a command or is required by law to engage in that which is prohibited by God, the Christian would have to disobey the civil authority, since it is better to obey God than man. The civil ruler does not have a right to justify or grant participation in an activity that is condemned by the scriptures. Civil authorities do not have the right or power to permit one to violate the laws of God. Hence, a thing may be legal but wrong. In our text, the apostles had been put in prison (verse 18) as a result of their preaching and the results that came from it. We are told in verse 19 that the angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors permitting them to escape, commanding them to go and preach in the temple. This they did. When the officers found them not in prison, they could not explain their escape since the guards were all there and the doors securely locked, but no prisoners. The high priest and all the officers were concerned about how this would be interpreted by the people. Perhaps it would lend credibility to the apostles claim.

The apostle did not run and hide, but rather returned to the temple

and continued to preach Jesus.

At any rate, the officials re-arrested the apostles and set them before the council. "Did we not straitly command you not to teach in His name? And behold you have filled Jerusalem with this doctrine." The apostles were guilty of breaking the law. They did the very thing the council told them not to do. Hence the statement, which even the Jewish council recognized as being true, "It is better to obey God than man." We cannot disobey God, even if the law of the land commands it. So also, neither can we do what the law of the land permits, if it violates a law of God.

Our lesson deals with a situation that is sanctioned by today's laws, but is in violation of Bible teaching, the subject of gambling. Gambling is legal in America. But can a Christian gamble?

What is gambling? Is it wrong? Can we actually prove from the Bible that it is a sin?

How could it possibly be wrong to bet a small sum on a horse race but all right to lose \$1000.00 in the stock market? Can we justify gambling on the basis that revenues generated by it go for good causes such as education? All the above questions have troubled many people, and they remain, demanding answers from people who strive to serve God.

Gambling is problem of great proportions today. John R. Hill in his book, *Theft By Consent*, claims that "lotteries are the most played form of legalized gambling in the U. S."

In 1997, Americans wagered over 35 billion dollars on lotteries. That amounts to \$135 for every man, woman, and child in our country. The amount gambled yearly in the U.S. is estimated at more than 500 billion dollars. We are told that at least 75% of all high school students have gambled. Such numbers make the practice appear respectable.

Seventy-two percent of Florida's seniors calling a hotline for problem gamblers identify the lottery as the source of their problem.

## WHAT IS GAMBLING?

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The dictionaries and encyclopedias define gambling as: "to abet money on the outcome of a game, contest, or other event" (American Heritage Dictionary, 546).

"Gambling is the wagering of money or other valuables on the outcome of a game or other event" (Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia).

"Gambling is betting on the outcome of a future event. Gamblers usually bet money or something else of value as a stake on the outcome they predict. When the outcome is settled, the winner collects the loser's stakes" (World Book Encyclopedia, 1979).

From the above definitions we can see that there are three elements involved in gambling:

1. There is an uncertain event that is arbitrarily determined. 2. There is a bet or wager that is deliberately chanced. 3. There is a winner and a loser. The winner gains at the expense of the loser. Anytime these three elements are present, there is gambling.

On the other hand, gambling is not taking a risk. Life has risks at every turn. In fact, life is full of risks. Merely crossing the street has some risk. Driving a car, participating in a sports event, all have risks. However, none of them are gambling. Why? Because taking a risk does not have the three elements we have already mentioned.

Buying a single stock may be risky. If the business in which I invest does well, no one loses. Furthermore, there is no wager involved. Something of value is bought that may go up or down in value.

Buying insurance is not gambling. In this instance something of val-

ue is purchased, i.e. financial protection. The buyer and the insurance company both stand to gain. The risk is not created by buying the policy.

Prizes such as winning a sweepstakes is not gambling. There is no risk created when one registers to win a prize. There is no bet or wager involved. The three elements are not present; hence, no gambling.

Gambling is not determined by degree or size. It is a matter of what action is taken and not the degree. A bet can involve 50 cents or \$500 dollars.

Gambler's Anonymous defines gambling for the compulsive gambler as "any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or 'skill' constitutes gambling."

This would include little things such as flipping for who would buy a cup of coffee.

Gambling takes many forms. Some bet on horse races or dog races, others pay poker, roulette or slot machines, still others play the lottery.

## **WHY GAMBLING IS WRONG**

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Some might argue that since the Bible does not specifically mention or condemn gambling by name there is nothing wrong with it. The Bible does not always state the conclusion that we are to draw. However, God often gives us the evidence from which to draw that conclusion. An example of this is found in Luke 17:19-22. John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not answer with a specific "yes" or "no." Instead, He worked miracles in their presence and told them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard."

Based upon the evidence of His miracles, it was evident that He was the Coming One.

The same point can be made about gambling. There is no passage that says “thou shalt not gamble.” However, there are biblical principles that are violated in gambling. Hence, there is sufficient evidence given to prove gambling is wrong.

#### A. Gambling is addictive.

The enslaving nature of gambling is seen in the necessity of such organizations as Gambler’s Anonymous. The crimes bred by gambling suggests that it is an addiction.

From the Alabama Family Alliance, we have the following quote: “For many of these problem gamblers the source of their trouble is the lottery. Of the 40,000 calls to the Council on Compulsive Gambling national hotline in 1996, fully 52% were from adults addicted to playing the lottery.” Paul said, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any,” (1 Cor. 6:12). Paul affirms in this passage that even a thing right within itself becomes wrong when it reaches the point of addiction. In such situations, we are not in control of ourselves.

#### 2. Gambling is Covetousness.

In gambling, one has the desire to gain what is not rightfully his. He seeks to win at the expense of others. Such is covetousness which, Paul says, is idolatry (Col. 3:5). The same apostle further declared, “For the love of money is the root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows,” (1 Timothy 6:10).

#### 3. Gambling violates the principle of love and the golden rule.



The gambler cannot love his neighbor and practice the golden rule while striving to take all at the loser's expense. Gambling is essentially stealing by consent just as dueling is murder by consent. In gambling, one beats another out of what he does not want to give. We are taught to love our neighbor (Mt. 22:39) and do unto others as we would want them to do to us (Mt. 7:12).

4. Gambling violates the principle of stewardship.

We are obligated to God to be good stewards of the blessings He gives us. This is a solemn responsibility and cannot be taken lightly. We must be diligent in handling what belongs to our master. 1 Cor. 4:2, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

In gambling, the odds are against winning. In fact, it is estimated that in the typical state lottery, the odds of picking the right numbers are one in 12 to 14 million. Not very good odds. Certainly not a good investment. 1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

5. Gambling violates the legitimate means of transfer of money or property.

There are three legitimate ways in which the transfer of money or goods takes place.

(a) Labor involves money earned and paid for effort or work that has been given.

(b) Exchange is where a commodity is exchanged for something of value. This could consist of money or other goods. Buying and selling involves exchange.

(c) A gift may be money or something of value that is given without any expectation of return. Gifts come in the form of an inheritance, prize, etc. Gambling does not involve a gift, exchange or labor, hence

cannot qualify as a legitimate way to transfer money or property.

Gambling may be legal, but it is wrong. It creates untold misery and problems and in no way can be considered a boon to society.

## **GAMBLING BREEDS OTHER SINS**

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Jesus taught that we can know a tree by its fruits (Mt. 7:15-20).

The problems that gambling generates tells us that it is corrupt.

### 1. Crime To Support The Addiction.

Many gamblers who never thought of committing a crime have turned to all types of criminal activity to support their addiction to gambling.

According to research by the Compulsive Gambling Center in Baltimore, at least two-thirds of compulsive gamblers engage in criminal activity to finance their addiction, including check forgery, tax evasion, embezzlement, bookmaking, prostitution, selling drugs, and fencing stolen goods. (*Theft by Consent* by John R. Hill).

### 2. Suicide.

The probability of attempting suicide is far greater among gamblers than the general population.

General: 1.1 percent; gamblers: 13 percent.

### 3. The general crime rate is up in gambling areas.

Las Vegas had the highest crime rate per capita in the nation in a recent year. In 1994, it had five times the violent crimes as it was able to solve. Atlantic City officials claim that two-thirds of all its crimes are gambling related. In Mississippi, bank robberies have increased four-fold among the river since 1992. Tunica has reported a 500 percent

increase in drunk driving. With the knowledge of what gambling is and the principles that it violates, it is easy to see why it is wrong.

## ON PREACHING AND PREACHERS

It was my good fortune to grow up in the old Vaughn Blvd. church in Ft. Worth, Texas. When I was five years of age, our family moved from Cleburne to Ft. Worth where my father found work. For several years prior to my birth, my parents had attended the Walnut St. church in Cleburne. This congregation listened to such preachers as H.C. Harper, Homer L. King, Dr. G.A. Trott, Homer A. Gay, T.E. McBride and others. My mother sought out what she believed was a faithful church where we could worship after our move. Growing up at Vaughn Blvd. was a blessing. I had the opportunity to listen to a number of men who were dedicated and intent on doing what they believed to be right. It was here that the seed was planted in my heart that eventually led to my becoming a gospel preacher. Our home was always open to preachers. During meetings, we would often either keep them or have them over for meals. Listening to their experiences was both informative and exciting to me. I was young and impressionable at that time, and many of these men left marks that remain in my heart to this day. Barney Welch and Fred Kirbo often preached at Vaughn Blvd. Barney lived in and around Temple, Texas, at the time and Fred just over the state line in Oklahoma. Both men were extremely talented as pulpit speakers. They could charm the audience with their wit and wisdom. They often traveled together and held what they called “double-header” meetings, preaching night

about. Another central Texas preacher who frequently came our way was James R. Stewart. Brother Stewart was a kindly man who, as I remember, was always attentive to young people. He made you feel important and impressed you with the idea that he was glad to see you again. His pulpit style was simple and straightforward. There was no pretending on his part, just an honest attempt to tell the old, old story to those who would listen. Homer A. Gay was another preacher who influenced me greatly. In the early years, it may have been the attention he paid to young people that impressed me most, but as time passed I came to appreciate his straightforward style of preaching the gospel. He was what he was without fanfare or false appeal. He told it like it was and let the chips fall where they would. Little did I realize, at that early age, that some day I would have the privilege of traveling with him and would for the rest of my life owe him a debt of gratitude for the interest he took in my welfare. Homer L. King often passed our way as well. This rotund, happy fellow was, in many ways, the consummate gospel preacher. His ability as a speaker was equaled only by a few. It was hard to be sad around him. He always looked on the bright side of life. His timely little stories, along with a good dose of laughter, charmed many get-togethers. He had a knack for preaching sermons that people wanted to hear again and again. Such titles as "Red String in the Window," "The Honest Gentile," and "The Parable of the Vineyard" thrilled audiences for years. The Byfords of Waco, Texas, were some of his great admirers. Brother Byford once told me about a trip they took to Missouri where Brother King lived and was in a meeting at that time. The night of their arrival, Homer preached on "The Red String in the Window." Leslie told someone, "Just think, I came all the way from Texas to hear that sermon. I couldn't tell you how many times I've already heard it in Texas." People, however, never seemed to tire of hearing him preach what they called his "old sugar sticks." In addition to the preachers I've already mentioned, we often had the opportunity to hear J. Ervin Waters, M.J. Buffington and many others. These

were the formative years of my life and during this time I would, in my mind, visualize myself preaching to audiences as these good men were doing. I cannot remember the exact time or situation but, from these early encounters, I made up mind that some day I would preach the gospel. In 1949, we had Brother H.E. Robertson to hold our Labor Day meeting in Ft. Worth. I was, at the time, thirteen years of age. I had determined in my mind, before the meeting ever began, that I would be baptized. On the night of September 3, 1949, I responded to the invitation and was baptized that night in a small creek in Cobb Park. A year or two thereafter, Brother J.B. Spradley gave me my first opportunity to make a talk at church at a Wednesday night service. From that day to the present, I have tried, as best as I could, to preach what I believe to be the truth.

In the late forties and early fifties, churches of Christ were growing by leaps and bounds. The Ft. Worth area was home to numerous congregations of what we called at that time "Sunday school churches." Most all of them had several gospel meetings a year and many of the preachers who conducted the meetings were "big name preachers." During this time frame, I had the opportunity to listen to some of the storied men among their ranks. Among them: G.C. Brewer, Guy N. Woods, George W. Dehoff, Reuel Lemmons, Leroy Brownlow, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and others. Ft. Worth, at that time, was home to the likes of Roy Deaver, Eldred Stephens, and Thomas B. Warren. When these congregations had a gospel meeting, it was customary to have morning services each day. The services on week mornings were reserved for preaching to the church, while the evening service addressed matters of first principles. When G.C. Brewer came to town, I was anxious to both see and hear him. He was at that time very respected among his own brethren and often quoted among ours because of his claim that he had been responsible for the introduction of individual cups in the communion service. I remember that he was neat in appearance, well dressed, and very articulate. He spoke with ease and power, and it seemed that the audience was hanging on his

every word. Years later, Brother Guy N. Woods told me as we visited in his office at the *Gospel Advocate* in Nashville that in his opinion the three greatest preachers of his time were N.B. Hardeman, Foy Wallace Jr, and G.C. Brewer. Reuel Lemmons, who at the time was publisher of the *Firm Foundation*, was one of the most fluent speakers I ever had the pleasure of hearing. He spoke with an almost poetic flow. His sermons were so well delivered that each point seemed to be an outgrowth of the previous one, and as he spoke one became totally absorbed in the presentation. When George DeHoff came to town, I could hardly wait to hear him. His reputation preceded him. I was not impressed. Perhaps it was an off night, or maybe just me, but for some reason in my estimation he fell short of his prior billing. Often people talk of "the best preacher I ever heard" by telling how they have been affected or moved by certain men. I must say that all in all of those men not affiliated with our number the most fluent, logical, and effective teacher I ever listened to was W. Carl Ketcherside. I heard him preach numerous times, listened to him effectively and powerfully debate Flavil Colley in Dallas, Texas, corresponded with him, visited with him one on one and time and time again never ceased to be amazed by his knowledge, vocabulary, memory and presentation of what he believed to be the truth. He at one time led a rather sizable group of people and one could see why he was so respected when they met and visited with him. Leroy Brownlow was almost a household word around Ft. Worth. He preached for the Polytechnic church for years. On one occasion while we were visiting in his office, he told me that when he graduated from Abilene Christian College, he could read the New Testament through in Greek, but as time passed, without practice, he lost that ability. His books, "*Why I Am A Member of the Church of Christ*" and "*Seed for the Sower*," have sold thousands of copies. Having listened to all these preachers helped me, I think, to recognize good preaching when I hear it. Some would probably accuse me of prejudice, but in my humble opinion, the brethren with whom I have labored for over sixty years

have produced some of the best preachers one could find anywhere. Our buildings may be smaller, and our crowds not as large, but the quality of the preaching coming out of our pulpits, by our leading preachers, is second to none. Good sound preaching is the life blood of the Church. Without it, we stagnate and die.

## PREACHERS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

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When I first started preaching, there were three preachers who greatly influenced my life. I owe to each of them a tremendous debt of gratitude.



### Homer A. Gay

At the Sulphur, Oklahoma, meeting in 1951, Homer A. Gay came to me and asked me to travel with him during the summer months as he held his meetings. I was elated at the invitation and have often wondered what course my life might have taken had this never happened. I learned so much from this man. He possessed a style of preaching very common in those days. There was nothing flamboyant about his actions in

the pulpit. He was straight forward and very serious in his delivery of the sacred message. He always gave scriptures for his major points and often told stories to illustrate the point being made. He was kind, considerate, and loving in his attitude. If you displeased him, he let you know it. If you were doing well, he told you. He possessed an Irish wit that made him all the more enjoyable. He could be funny without even trying. His stories about the early part of his life and preaching experiences were often capti-



Homer and Susie Gay  
and Ronny Wade



vating. He was, at times, a hard taskmaster. When he gave you an assignment, he expected you to comply. When you were successful, he complimented you. There were times when I would go ahead and begin a meeting for him while he closed one out at the previous place. I heard many of his sermons over and over, never tiring of the points he made. Whatever I am or may be as a preacher, I owe in great part to him.



**Homer L. King**

Not long after I made the decision to become a preacher, Homer L. King came to Ft. Worth and spent the night at our house. My parents had known him for years. He had come to Cleburne and held meetings at the old Walnut Street meeting house when they attended there. That night, we slept in the same room in twin beds. If you never slept in the same room with Brother King, you missed an opportunity to miss a good night's sleep. He was known for his "snoring," which, by the way, was no small matter. That night, however, I

well remember him saying, "Ronny, I am hearing good things about you." To a young boy wanting to become a good preacher, that meant more than he could have known. He later sent encouraging words by mail to push me toward my goal. As I continued, he encouraged me to fill out an Ordination Certificate which he and Brother Gay signed. And still later, when Homer Gay died, he suggested I write an article each month for the Old Paths Advocate in place of the one Brother Gay had been writing. In later years, we became very close friends. He was always a good source of advice and information. After he suffered a stroke while in a meeting in the area, I drove up to Stockton, Calif., to visit with him. As I parked my car, I could see him through the window sitting in his chair. He looked so frail and sad, just a shadow of his former self. Even though he lived for several years, he was limited in his ability to function as he had in years gone by. He had certainly left his mark on my life as he had on the lives of

so many other preachers and brethren in general.



### **J. Ervin Waters**

It was my privilege to travel with Ervin Waters during the formative years of my preaching career. At the time, he was probably more in demand for meetings than any other preacher. His reputation as a debater, as well as his expertise in the pulpit, were well known. I can honestly say that I never heard him preach that I didn't learn something. At times, Brother Bennie Cryer and I traveled with Ervin at the same time. Often, one of us would either close out a meeting for him or go ahead and begin another

one. During those years, Ervin was holding one meeting right after another. His travels took him to all quarters of the brotherhood. Often mixed with debates plus meetings, he would be on the road, away from home, for several weeks. During meetings, there would be discussions that added greatly to my knowledge base. He was without doubt "a man of the book." Much of his preaching was without notes.

Once he formulated a subject in his mind, it was there for good. He would think and then rethink the points he wanted to make until the sermon took shape and was ready for delivery. He was an avid reader and possessed a tremendous knowledge of restoration history. I always grew when in his presence and always learned when he preached. I am in debt to Ervin for much of what I know today and grateful for the privilege of traveling with him.



## **THE HISTORY OF *LET THE BIBLE SPEAK* TELEVISION PROGRAM**

In the spring of 1960, I conducted a meeting in Lebanon, Missouri. During the meeting, the brethren talked with me about the possibility of relocating there with a view to starting a television program. At the time, I was living and working in the Ft. Worth, Texas, area. The idea of moving and relocating my young family was not necessarily appealing but the prospect of starting a television program was. Brother C.W. (Bill) Van Stavern was the driving force behind the idea. I have been privileged during my almost sixty years of preaching to work with many devoted and dedicated individuals who loved the truth and longed to see it preached to the masses of our day. I have never met anyone, however, whose desire exceeded that of Bill. He envisioned the possibility of untold thousands hearing the truth for the first time. Were he alive today, he no doubt would be overwhelmed by the amazing success of *Let The Bible Speak*. In September of 1962, along with my wife and our three young children, we left Ft. Worth and moved to Lebanon. Soon after arriving, we began to talk about and plan for the possible beginning of the telecast. Before I go into the particulars of how the program began, let me first set the stage so you will understand the daunting task that lay before us. In the early 60's, television was still a developing industry. Not nearly as many people had television sets as they do today. There were no ca-

ble or dish companies. Those who had television sets had to use tall antennas on their house or “rabbit ears” in order to receive the signal from the television station. This presented somewhat of a problem, especially in rural areas. Also at that time, there were many in the church who viewed television as a sin. Some even referred to the antenna on the house as “the Devil’s flagpole.” I mention these things because it became my job to travel around and visit the small churches in rural Southwest Missouri and solicit their help in financially supporting the program. It took some time for me to complete that task but when finished all of them, except one, agreed to help us out financially or back the program by encouraging others to watch. In September of 1963, Bill and I went to Springfield one day and visited KYTV channel 3, the NBC affiliate. We explained what we were after and the salesman told us that he had a 10:00-10:30 opening. After consulting with the other brethren, we signed a thirteen week contract (which was common at that time) and on October 20, 1963, for the first time ever, our brethren entered the field of television evangelism. None of us were prepared for what would ultimately happen. In those days, everything was black and white. No color programming. We used two inch video to record the programs. I would drive to Springfield every other week and record two programs. When these had aired, I would return and do two more. The first singing was provided by a quartet consisting of Brethren Clovis Cook, Leo Cook, Travis Cook and Sonny Boy Gay. The churches who helped financially were 10<sup>th</sup> and Ray in Kansas City, Kan., Ben Davis, Lees Summit, Benton Avenue in Springfield and Lebanon, Missouri. The first few weeks we were on the air, nothing dramatic happened. We began to receive letters on a weekly basis but because of the time slot, our own people were unable to view the broadcast and that presented a drawback. We needed to build interest among the churches so we could continue with the program. The station notified us that beginning in December of 1963, an 8 a.m. time slot would be available. We immediately accepted and on the first Sunday of December, our program

changed to eight o'clock. Letters began to pick up and our own people were able to view the program each Sunday.

This in and of itself was a great boost to the program. As we began to address doctrinal issues as well as some of the innovations that separated churches of Christ, news of *Let The Bible Speak* began to spread throughout Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas. Mail increased dramatically, discussions between our brethren and those using Sunday schools and individual cups in the communion began to take place. By early 1964, the television station estimated that we were reaching over 40,000 viewers every Sunday morning. Early in 1964, I received a letter from Brother Paul Havener, who was preaching for the church in Strafford, Mo., challenging me for a debate on the issues between us. He stated that word had reached him that I had made the statement that all the preachers in Springfield were afraid to meet me in debate. He assured me that he was not, and enclosed propositions in his letter. In answer, I told him that I had never made any statement as to who would or would not debate the issues between us, but that I would be willing to debate him on both the cups and Sunday school classes. I announced on the TV program the proposed debate. When I did a literal firestorm erupted. The preachers in Springfield got busy and within weeks, Brother Havener left town, obviously fired from his job at Strafford. I was unable to get any response from him or the church at Strafford whatsoever. Later, I did get an address where he could be reached, but he would not answer my letter. What turned out to be a stern challenge vanished like a cloud of smoke. Brother Eddie Buttram, a leading member and teacher in one of the local churches in Springfield, told me that if the debate materialized it would split the churches in that area right down the middle. It is doubtful that would have happened, but it was evident that these digressive churches were not about to allow a debate, a testimony to the widespread influence our program was having. With the coming spring, my meetings in various parts of the United States began. We decided to suspend the program until I returned in

the fall. This was a fatal mistake. Someone has said that hindsight is 20/20. Had we known the result of that decision, things would have been approached differently. When we started the program again in the fall, we essentially had to start all over. We obviously picked up old viewers, but it took precious time to do so. Unfortunately, we probably lost some that we never regained. In time, however, viewers picked up and the program continued with great success.

In early 1965, Wayne Robinson, one of the leaders of the church in Lebanon, received a circular from a studio in Noel, Missouri, operated by Carl Robie, advertising 16mm film production. I contacted Mr. Robie and apprised him of our TV work, and asked if he might be able to record our program on film for distribution to TV stations. He said that he could and soon we reached an agreement on price and location for the work to be done. Kansas City, Mo., was the sight selected and in time we recorded 13 black and white programs. At the time, this was a giant step forward. We were no longer bound by the large two inch video tape or the bi-weekly taping sessions. In addition, we could send the films to other stations for broadcast. During the spring of 1966, we made plans to move to Springfield to work with the Benton Avenue church and also be closer to the TV work. Little did I realize that I would remain and work in Springfield for the next forty-two years. During this time, frame television was changing from black and white to color production. In the fall of 1966, we again contracted with Robie studios to film 13 color programs. All the filming took place at the studios in Noel, Missouri. When they were completed, we had 26 16mm films that could be shown in various places around the country. By the spring of 1970, the filmed series had shown over the following television stations: KYTV Springfield, Mo.; KMTC Springfield, Mo.; KTVO Ottumwa, Iowa; WBAP Fort Worth, Texas; CATV Reno, Nev.; KCOY Santa Maria, Calif.; and KFEQ in St. Joseph, Mo.

By the fall of 1971, response was so good and contacts so numerous

that Brother Clovis Cook moved to Springfield from Kansas City to assist in the television work. Clovis was a well known preacher whose ability in meeting people and bonding with them was unmatched. In addition to running down leads, he took care of all correspondence and correspondence courses. He also assisted in taping numerous question and answer sessions that were aired at various intervals. These programs proved to be very profitable and generated a great deal of response from the viewing audience. By 1973, our mail was increasing on a weekly basis. Columbia, Mo., was also added as an outlet and we received good response from that area as well. Close to the end of 1973, Brother M.E. Frank, a long time preacher (42 years) for the Christian Church, was converted as a result of the T.V. program. He soon became well known among our brethren preaching among the churches until his death several years later. In 1974, we expanded the program into Wichita Falls, Texas; Kansas City, Mo.; and Midland, Texas. In the Midland area, the program could be seen over stations in Odessa, Big Spring, Andrews, and Monahans. The work was growing and people were hearing the truth, many for the first time. Northern Arkansas was always one of the most productive areas from which we received leads. Harrison, Huntsville, and Mountain Home all produced letters on a continual basis. In 1975, we received a challenge to debate the question of Sunday schools in the Mountain Home area. Boyd E. Morgan, a legend in northern Arkansas, was chosen to defend the practice of Sunday Schools and I was to deny. The actual debate took place in Gassville, Ark., on October 27-28. On the first night, the building was filled to capacity. Over 500 people gathered, a majority of them backing Brother Morgan. This was the only time I ever remember where those supporting the innovations outnumbered those of us who opposed them. Brother Clovis Cook moderated for me, as he did in a number of the debates in which I was engaged. Much good was accomplished in this discussion. The digressive churches realized that we were a group that wouldn't disappear. They had to deal with us and our convictions.

We weren't going away. All of this was due to the TV program. We never could have reached this point without it.

The year 1977 proved to be a year of expansion. The Ft. Worth, Dallas area churches would sponsor the program over KTVT Channel 11, which was one of the largest cable stations in the nation. Each week, we could reach almost 500,000 cable homes in addition to the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex. To date, *Let The Bible Speak* had appeared over stations in Springfield, Kansas City, St. Louis, St. Joe, all in Missouri, and Wichita Falls, Ft. Worth, Midland, Odessa, Monahans, all in Texas; also Reno, Nev.; Lansing, Mich.; Santa Maria, Calif.; and Ottumwa, Iowa. Who would have ever guessed that from the small beginning in October of 1963 in Springfield, millions of people in far-flung States would be able to hear the gospel, many of them for the first time?

With the beginning of 1978, *Let The Bible Speak* expanded into Joplin, Mo.; Yuba City, Calif.; Huntington, W. Va.; and Atlanta, Ga. The program was especially effective in West Virginia. Response was almost immediate and continued as long as the program aired. By the end of the year, Brother Johnny Elmore assumed the speaking duties for the program in Ft. Worth. Later, Johnny would have a program out of the Sherman-Denison area of north Texas reaching into southern Oklahoma which was very effective and reached thousands with the gospel.

During 1979, I taped a 13 week series titled "Twelve Reasons You Should Investigate The Church of Christ." The church in Lebanon, Mo., made these available, without charge, to any church desiring to use them. The year 1980 was in some ways a year of loss. During the year, Bill Van Stavern was called away. Bill had been the original force behind the concept of a television program. He had lived to see it grow and flourish. No one was more excited about its results than he. If any man ever loved and longed to see the gospel preached to



others, it was Bill.

In May of 1983, after twenty years of producing and preaching on *Let The Bible Speak*, I felt that it was time for a new face and voice. At the time, I could not say enough about the church in Lebanon, who had backed both me and the program for this extended length of time. I shall be eternally grateful to them for their confidence in me and their willingness to extend themselves in this great and noble work. Brother Tommy Shaw, who lived in the Springfield area, was chosen to replace me as speaker. Tommy proved to be a competent and dedicated servant. He remained as speaker from May of 1983 until January of 1987 when he suddenly and unexpectedly died of a massive heart attack. I agreed to again be the speaker until a suitable replacement could be found.

Tommy would be greatly missed in his home as well as the church. He was rock solid in the scriptures and could always be depended upon to come down on the right side of an issue. Shortly after I assumed the speaking role in Springfield, I was asked by the Lebanon church to begin a program in Jefferson City, Mo., which we did later in the spring. I continued to be the speaker for several months when Brother Irvin Barnes was selected to take over the speaking role for the program. Irvin proved to be an outstanding choice. Well versed in the scriptures, he had an effective delivery and his selection and range of Bible topics proved to be very popular. During his tenure, *Let The Bible Speak* also aired out of Louisville, Ky. This venue proved to be especially productive with the establishment of a church in the viewing area and the conversion of a young man, Jimmy Cating, who became a sound gospel preacher and continues to this day the work of an evangelist. Irvin continued on the program for six plus years. During that time, he produced a number of tracts which enjoy distribution to the present. However, the weekly grind coupled with health problems caused him to leave the program. At that time, the program ceased to exist. For a period of almost two years, there was no telecast.

The brethren at Mission Hills in Springfield wanted to revive the program and began seeking a suitable time slot on one of the television channels in town. Finally KY3, the NBC affiliate, had an opening at 6:30 am on Sunday morning, with the possible promise of a better time later on, and after due consideration, they decided to take that time slot. Again, I returned, for the third time, as speaker. Little did I realize, at that point, that I would remain speaker for an additional 683 taped telecasts.

In 1996, San Angelo, Texas, began showing our tapes over a station out of Abilene, Texas, which, again, increased our viewing audience by several thousand. Gradually, the program was becoming more widespread and the leads were coming in from towns all over the areas where it was being shown. In January of 1999, we began the program in Nashville, Tenn. This was a major addition. Nashville is full of Churches of Christ, and the home for the *Gospel Advocate*, and David Lipscomb College. It was a tremendous market. Even though we were on at an early hour on Sunday morning, it wasn't long before the letters and leads started coming in. Later on in the year, we also added Little Rock, Ark., which gave us coverage over a greater part of the whole state. In the year 2000, we added Odessa-Midland, Texas; Ft. Smith, Ark.; and Puducah, Ky. In 2001, we added Tulsa, Okla.; Jackson, Miss.; and Tallahassee, Fla., to the list of cities airing the program. In my journal, for the beginning of 2003, I wrote, "Mail has been extra good of late and a number of good leads are coming in on a regular basis. Three have been baptized as a result of the program in the past few weeks." Between the years 2003-2005, we added Oklahoma City (over a station that reached most all of the state); La Grange, Ga.; and San Francisco, Calif. In addition, Brother Kevin Presley had a program airing out of Dothan, Ala., under the same title that covered southern Alabama and much of the panhandle of Florida. Kevin is a powerful preacher and his preaching has produced great results.

In 2007, a big change was taking place in the production of televi-

sion programs. The FCC passed a ruling requiring all programs to be closed captioned for the benefit of hearing impaired people. This change increased the work load for program production greatly. The sermons had to be written out and then electronically sent to the station. During the taping process, the words were shown on the screen so the hearing impaired could follow along. I had been used to preaching from notes. I never did write out my sermons word for word, so it was quite an adjustment. This requirement, coupled with the fact that I had remained on the program longer than I had intended, caused me to suggest to the Mission Hills church that by the end of 2008 they should get someone to replace me as speaker. It was in some ways a difficult decision for me. I had been there so long and done so many programs that it was almost second nature for me. I really felt, however, that it would be good for the program in general if I stepped aside. Brother Brett Hickey was chosen to become the speaker, which he did on the first Sunday of 2009. In November of 2008, I moved to La Grange, Ga., to work with the church there. In January of 2009, we started a television program out of Columbus, Ga., over Fox 57 using my previously recorded tapes from the Springfield area. Currently, the 21<sup>st</sup> Street church in Oklahoma City continues to use my tapes over a station that reaches into all parts of the state. Both programs are proving to be very successful. To date between ten and twelve people have left one of the digressive churches in the Columbus area and are now attending the church on 31<sup>st</sup> Street in that city. In addition, Brother Kevin Presley preaches over the CBS outlet in Jackson, Miss., and then sends his tapes to several other locations for broadcast. Brother Brett Hickey continues to preach over the Springfield station KYTV and sends his programs to the Dallas-Fort Worth area and also Birmingham, Ala.

It is my firm conviction that my association with *Let The Bible Speak* from 1963-2008 is the most productive thing I have ever done in the field of gospel preaching. I have literally preached the gospel to thousands upon thousands of people who would have never heard it oth-

erwise. I have letters in my files from people who have said that had it not been for *Let The Bible Speak* they never would have learned the truth. They credit the program with leading them from sin to salvation. I count it an honor to have had the opportunity to be a part of such a great work. There are several churches that would not have existed had it not been for the broadcast. To God be all the glory. My prayer is that long after I am gone the program will continue to broadcast the glad message of salvation to the lost of the earth.

Ronny F. Wade

December, 2009

## DEBATING

In January of 1949, I was privileged to hear Brother Homer A. Gay debate Dr. J.L. Hines in Dallas, Texas, on the cups and Sunday school issues confronting the church at that time. I was only twelve years old, but remember as though it were yesterday many of the events surrounding that debate. I was impressed with Brother Gay's handling of the Bible as well as his meek and humble presentation. Brother Homer L. King moderated for Brother Gay and Brother J. Ervin Waters, who was also present and rendered valuable assistance I'm sure in ways that I did not understand at that time. It seemed to me that the truth had been convincingly presented and defended by Brother Gay. At the conclusion of the debate, those brethren who backed Brother Hines challenged for another debate and vowed to obtain the Fair Park Auditorium as the place where it would be held. Brother Waters would defend the position taken by Brother Gay and Brother Logan Buchanan would defend the same position held by Brother Hines. Later in September of that same year, the debate did take place as planned, not in the Fair Park Auditorium but on a vacant lot under a tent raised by our own brethren. I was privileged to hear every night of that debate. Brother Waters, at that time, was at the height of his debating career, and did a masterful job presenting and defending what I believe to be the truth. This was my introduction to debating. At that young age, I never dreamed that I would ever debate, in fact

I had no plans for such to ever happen. However, in 1961, while in a meeting at Broken Bow, Okla., Brother J.R. Tidmore arranged for Brother H.M. Paynter, preacher for the local church in Broken Bow using cups and classes, to attend the second Friday night of our meeting and present his position on the issues that divided us and I was to rebut his arguments and present what we believed to be the truth on these matters. At the conclusion of our discussion, we extended the invitation and a sister came forward leaving the Sunday school brethren and took her stand for the truth. I never saw or heard from Brother Paynter after that. The discussion was conducted in good humor and a good spirit prevailed. During that meeting, I baptized Randy Tidmore, who later became an able gospel preacher and a missionary to various places beyond the borders of the United States. His father later gave me a tape recording of that discussion which I still have in my possession today.

Many have been critical of debating as a means of arriving at truth. With some, the idea of debating is opposed to the spirit of Christianity, contending that to debate is sinful. This attitude is, in part, due to some who have been overzealous to the point of being rude and disrespectful while at the same time claiming to seek truth. Others, who were given to ridicule, slandered their fellow man to the point of creating such hard feelings that all hope of reaching agreement or a better understanding was lost. In his introduction to *Debates That Made History*, J.J. Haley wrote, "Theological polemics was as unpopular a hundred years ago amongst the better type of evangelical Christians as it is today...Spirituality and morality are not debatable questions. Controversial religion is the interpretation of religion in terms of the intellect and quickly degenerates into rationalism on the one hand or legalism on the other...This divine religion which originated in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth placed its sovereign impress and accent on life, life that found expression in conduct, character, and service. According to this conception of the Christian religion, the Gospel needed to be proclaimed and practiced, not debated. This, in brief,

is substantially the attitude towards religious controversy occupied by both Thomas and Alexander Campbell 110 years ago. In the year 1820, ten years later, much against his inclinations, and just as much against his convictions, he was persuaded to engage in a “dispute,” as it was then called, with the Rev. John Walker, a combative minister of the Seceder denomination of Presbyterians. This first of Campbell’s five debates helped to change his whole attitude concerning debating. He later wrote, “Truth and liberty, both religious and political, are the first fruits of well directed controversy. Peace and eternal bliss will be the harvest home. Let the opponents of controversy, or they who controvert controversy, remember that had there been no controversy, neither the Jewish nor the Christian religion, could have ever been established; nor had it ceased could the Reformation have ever been achieved. It has been the parent of almost all the social blessings we enjoy.” It is the belief of this writer that Mr. Campbell was right in his observation. Good debating is good for the cause of truth. Truth never loses because of honest and fair investigation.

I have never considered myself a great or accomplished debater. I have, however, never failed to speak up when asked to do so. It is my hope that the brief review of some of the debates in which I have been engaged will inspire some other brother to take up the challenge to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

### **SPEARS-WADE DEBATE**

My first real debate took place in Oklahoma City, Okla., July 12-15, 1965. The first night was conducted in the city auditorium and the remaining three nights in the 10<sup>th</sup> and Francis meeting house used by Brother Spears and his brethren. Tenth and Francis was where Foy E. Wallace Jr. preached for several years. Its name and location were made famous by his presence there. With the division over cooperative efforts among churches of Christ, those brethren associated with Brother Spears now controlled and met in this building. I had never

met Brother Spears before the debate. I found him to be friendly, likable, and genuinely convinced of his position. Brother Wayne Fussell moderated for me. Wayne had experience working among those brethren who held what some called the “anti-cooperation position” and he rendered valuable assistance in the debate. Several of our preachers were in attendance and were much appreciated for their support. I learned a lot in this debate. Experience is a great teacher. It has been my pleasure to see Brother Spears a number of times since that debate. I still consider him a friend. There wasn’t then, nor is there now, any personal animosity between us. Not one unkind word was spoken during the debate. One lady came over from the cups and class people as a result of that debate and she remained faithful until she left this world for a better one. Brother J.T. Smith served as moderator for Brother Smith. He and I were to eventually engage in three debates several years removed from 1965.

## **THE MOORE-WADE DEBATES**

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I was privileged to have four debates (three oral and one written) with Elmer Moore. Our first took place on the nights of September 5-8, 1966, in Fredrick, Oklahoma. The subjects discussed embraced the number of cups to be used in the communion and the arrangement for teaching the Bible or the Sunday school issue. I had never met Brother Moore before the debate. He was, I soon learned, a seasoned and experienced debater. In fact, he may well have been the best at clear reasoning and presentation of anyone with whom I ever discussed these issues. Brother Clovis Cook served as my moderator. Clovis had moderated for many of the debates Ervin Waters had held in previous years. He was experienced and was an able guide and help to me when I needed it most. Ervin was also present, along with Lynwood Smith and several other preachers, all who gave me encouragement and help. Brother Moore was honest, I believe, and very forceful in presentation. Little did I know that we would meet two



additional times in the future. We parted friends and so remained through the years. The crowds were good and seemed to profit from the discussion. Our second debate took place in New Orleans, La., on the nights of November 9-12, 1977. This debate came about as a result of the work being done by Brother Billy Dickinson, who lived in the area at that time. Billy had discussions with the local preacher, Brother Bill Collett, who represented Brother Moore's position, and he, along with his brethren, made arrangements for Elmer to do the debating. The crowds were not large, but interest was high. Lynwood Smith served as my moderator. During the debate, Brother Moore and I stayed at the same motel. We would see each other during the day, but usually conversation did not center around the previous night's discussion. After the debate, we parted friends, with no indication of ill will on either side. Unknown to me, however, was the fact that Brother Moore, at least according to some, felt he hadn't done his best. If this is true, it merely underscores his attitude when we met the third time in Harrison, Ark. The dates were April 10-13 the following year (1978). The debate was conducted in their meeting house. From the outset, it was easy to see that Elmer was on a mission. He fully intended, if at all possible, to totally dismantle my arguments and make it plain to all present that his position was the correct one. During this, as well as previous debates, he had taken a number of different positions on what "cup" meant in the Lord Supper records given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He had contended that the "cup" was the blood, or that the "cup" was the fruit of the vine, or "cup" was the name of a drinking vessel, or "cup" was used to suggest the fruit of the vine, or that the "cup" represented the blood, and finally, that the "cup" was a species. I prepared a chart titled "The Many Faces of Elmer Moore." On the chart, I gave word for word his answers to questions regarding the identity of the cup Jesus took in Matthew 26:27. His different answers to the question did him in. He simply could not recover from his own admissions, which indicated that he had not been consistent in the answers he gave. When asked, "Was

'Thayer right in placing the word 'cup' (Matthew 26:27) under literal usage?" He answered, "Yes." When asked, "Does the word 'cup' ever mean a container (drinking vessel) when used with reference to the Lord's Supper?" He answered, "A drinking vessel is named to suggest the fruit of the vine." Later, however, when asked, "Is the cup in Matthew 26:27 a species?" He answered, "Yes." As you can see, there were really many faces of Elmer Moore. He simply was not consistent. The chart had a telling effect on him. I followed this chart with another one titled "More Moore On Cup." On the chart I pointed out the following facts:

1. Moore said that a literal cup was used in the Lord's Supper.
2. He then said that Jesus called the literal container a cup.
3. Next he said that the cup is the fruit of the vine.
4. On another occasion, he said that the cup suggests the contents (if that were so, the cup could not be the contents. Since the content was the fruit of the vine, thus by his own admission, the cup could not be the fruit of the vine.)
5. He later contended that "cup" is a metaphor in Mt. 26:27.
6. And also that "cup" is a metonymy in Mt. 26:27.

This chart was also devastating to his position because it brought out his inconsistencies and inability to keep from contradicting himself. In the face of all this, he continued to maintain that his position was the right one, and that I was wrong for contending that Jesus had taken only one cup containing the fruit of the vine when he instituted the Supper. Some time later, Brother Mike Willis, publisher of the *Guardian of Truth*, contacted Don King, publisher of the *Old Paths Advocate*, about a written debate to be published by both papers at the same time on the issue of individual cups. The agreement was made and Brother Moore represented the *Guardian of Truth* and I

represented the *Old Paths Advocate*. That debate was published and read by thousands of people. Eternity alone will reveal its result. At this writing, word has reached me that Brother Moore has departed this life. This information makes me sad. Elmer, I believe, was a good man, a very good preacher by all accounts, and one of the best debaters I ever met.

## **GAGE-WADE DISCUSSIONS**

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We left Fredrick, Okla., on the morning of September 9, 1966, after the first Moore debate and drove to Huntsville, Ark., for a discussion that night with Brother Ralph Gage, who opposed Sunday schools but believed in the use of individual cups in the Lord's Supper. Ralph was living at Fort Smith, Ark., at the time. The discussion lasted only one night, but at its conclusion plans were made for a four night debate at a later date. This debate took place in January of 1967 in the little town of Huntsville, Ark. Our television program, *Let The Bible Speak*, out of Springfield, Mo., had aired in this area for a number of years. As a result, several had come over from those churches using a plurality of cups to distribute the fruit of the vine. Brother Gage was selected to represent their cause in debate. He was, I believe, one of the most honest men I ever engaged in public discussion. His answers to questions often got him into trouble, but he answered honestly. He didn't beat around the bush or try to answer in a way that protected him from further problems. He simply gave an answer consistent with what he believed. The debate lasted four nights with two nights each given to my affirming the use of one cup in the communion and he affirming that it was scriptural to use more than one drinking vessel. Brother Clovis Cook was my moderator and his brother, Quinton, moderated for him. Brother Arthur Wade was present and rendered valuable assistance. Arthur was one of the best read men in the scriptures it has been my privilege to know. Clovis used to say, "As long as you have Arthur you really don't need a concordance." Brother Gage

affirmed, "When the word cup is used with reference to the Lord's Supper, it is a memorial of the blood of Christ, therefore any number of containers may be used in the distribution of the fruit of the vine." The debate was held in a rented hall in the middle of Huntsville. Large crowds attended every night even though we were in the midst of a very cold winter in that part of the country. Huntsville was the county seat of Madison County, Arkansas. It was also the home of Governor Orval Faubus. The former Governor had become rather famous a few years before when he refused to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. The suit that followed (*Brown vs. Board of Education*) resulted in integration being ordered. One day during the debate, several of us went down town to eat at a small café and ran into Mr. Faubus. His family had connections with the Church of Christ, though he himself was not a member. He was very friendly and complementary in our brief discussion with him as to our mission in town at the time. His mother-in-law thought brother Lynwood Smith was the best preacher she ever heard. She was often in attendance at the little church at Hartwell when our preachers were in the area preaching. It is difficult to judge the results of this debate. To say that many were convinced of the position I held would be a misstatement. However, to assume that no good was accomplished would be wrong. The church at Hartwell continued to grow and became, in time, a very influential group for the entire area.

## **THE SMITH-WADE DEBATES**

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I had the privilege of meeting J.T. Smith in debate three times. First in Cincinnati-Dayton, Ohio, November 27-28 and 30-31, 1967; the second time in Houston, Texas, June 30-August 2, 1984; and last in Mountain Home, Ark., September 23-24, 1996. J.T. was a formidable opponent. He was always well prepared and eager to prosecute his cause. We have remained friends through the years. In fact, a few years back I attended one night of a meeting he was conducting in

Charleston, W. Va. After the service, we had coffee together and enjoyed a long discussion on matters confronting churches today.

Through the years, Brother Smith has published a number of church bulletins and papers. Many times he has written using arguments to prove institutionalism is wrong. Unfortunately for him, some of the very arguments he uses to show that these arrangements are wrong, also prove his practice of Bible classes and individual cups are wrong as well. With reference to the cup of the Lord, Brother Smith took the position that in every passage that discusses "the cup," the figure metonymy was involved. So the word "cup" was never used literally with reference to the Lord's Supper. Unfortunately for him, all lexicons of which I am aware take the position that "cup" (Mt. 26:27) is used literally, not figuratively. This puts him at odds with all recognized authorities. J.T. then takes the position that once metonymy is used, the vessel no longer has to exist. He said, "It is obvious that once a figure is established in metonymy, the thing mentioned does not have to be present in order for the figure to be used." So when the Bible says, "He took the cup," there was really no cup present since it was a metonymy. In other words, if a man says, "My radiator is boiling," since this is a metonymy (radiator used to suggest the water in it) once this is established, the radiator does not have to exist at all and one can say, "My radiator is boiling," and really there is not a literal radiator present. Such reasoning is so flawed that even the casual observer can see its fallacy. His inconsistencies were also glaring when he objected to my giving dates when individual cups were introduced and the fact that G.C. Brewer claimed he introduced them. And yet in his own writings in the *North Miami Bulletin*, he wrote about G.C. Brewer advocating putting colleges in the church budget in a speech at A.C.C. during the 1938 lectureship. Over and over again, this man met himself coming back. In fact, the greatest problem all the preachers have who oppose the institutions is the fact that the truths they use to condemn these unscriptural practices, I also use to condemn the cups and classes. I constructed chart after

chart that I copied directly from their works only changing the words from the named institutions to cups and classes and the argument fit perfectly. They always met themselves coming back. Inconsistency is a terrible problem.

## **THE HALSTEAD-WADE DEBATE**

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This debate took place in Kansas City, Mo., in the building of the Vivian Road Church of Christ, February 5-6 and 8-9, 1968. Several years before the debate took place, Brother Halstead had left those churches using individual cups and Bible classes in Shreveport, La., and began worshiping with the church meeting there, who used one cup. However, after a few years, he returned to the churches with whom he had previously been identified. It was during this time that we had our discussion. Brother Clovis Cook moderated for me and Gene Frost served as his moderator. Brother Halstead was not what I considered a good debater. He was impulsive, often speaking without weighing what he said. Gene Frost, at that time, was well known and widely used by the brethren with whom he was associated. It was evident that Dana looked up to him and respected him highly. During the debate, I read a quote from Frost to which Dana replied, "If Gene Frost said it, I believe it." That statement cost him dearly. He soon realized he should have never said that and before the debate ended, undoubtedly, wished he had not. After the debate, he wrote me saying that the debate had cost him his job. The brethren at Vivian Rd. had fired him. We continued to correspond for some time. He finally wrote and said he realized the classes were wrong and could not be defended, and that if I could explain the meaning of 1 Corinthians 10:16, "the cup of blessing which WE bless..." showing that Corinth and Ephesus did not bless the same cup, he would give up the cups. I tried in vain to explain that the "we" was a reference to "we the assembled" and not a reference to the two churches, but he would not accept that. Shortly thereafter he unexpectedly died. I loved this man

and felt sorry for him. He seemed tormented by the truth but was somehow unable to bring himself to accept it.

## **KNIGHT-WADE DEBATE**

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The Knight-Wade debate was held in Tulsa, Okla., on October 24-25, 1968. The first night was held in a building maintained by those brethren using a plurality of cups in the communion, with the last night in the Eleventh St. building where only one cup was used to distribute the fruit of the vine. At the time of the debate, Brother Knight was up in years and there was a noticeable age difference between us. I had to be careful in argument not to sound disrespectful. In fact, one of his own brethren reminded me one night that he was indeed much older than I and that I needed to respect his age. I tried to do that, while at the same time pressing him for proof of his practice. He brought years of preaching experience to the debate. He was also publisher of "*The Church Messenger*," a paper widely read among his brethren. He was married to the daughter of Clarence Teurman, one time publisher of "*The Apostolic Way*". His brother, Leland Knight, was doing the preaching when my parents Foy and Inez Wade came out of the Christian Church and took their stand for pure New Testament worship. The meeting was at the old Walnut Street Church in Cleburne, Texas. This man had weathered many storms. He had fought many battles during the years that brought significant change to churches of Christ. Unfortunately, he was holding on to a practice no more scriptural than some of the ones he rejected. Brother Paul was congenial, but his advanced age rendered him somewhat less able to reason than I'm sure he had been in earlier days. His arguments were weak and from time to time in his speeches he would take off preaching on some topic that really had little to do with the matter currently being discussed. I counted it an honor to be able to meet him in discussion and appreciated the opportunity to defend and present what I believed to be the truth on the number of drinking

vessels to be used in the Lord's Supper.

## SWINDLER-WADE DEBATE

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I first met Adrian Swindler in the fall of 1958 while working with the church in Waterloo, Iowa. He came over to Waterloo one Saturday for a get-together of people from several churches. At the time, and for several years thereafter, he was of the belief that there was no cause for divorce and remarriage today. We later met in Springfield, Mo., when I was living in Lebanon, Mo., for a discussion of the divorce and remarriage issues. He was a friendly sort, but very rigid in his argumentation. Some years later I held meetings in Bloomfield, Iowa, where he had relatives. He came for part of the meeting and our association was friendly and amicable. Sometime after this, however, he defected to the churches using individual cups and Sunday schools. At that time, he lived in Elmwood, Ill. His father-in-law was Al Larew of the Ottumwa, Iowa, congregation. Al was obviously disturbed by Adrian's departure. Precious family members were involved. He was encouraged over the fact that we were going to have a debate and obviously hopeful that something could be said that would cause Adrian to come back to the truth. That did not happen. The debate took place on Saturday, March 14, 1970. We had sessions in the morning and afternoon. Adrian was well read and persuasive in presentation. He refused to affirm that the "scriptures teach the use of individual cups," choosing rather to argue that the scriptures permitted them. He knew that if I were to draw a circle on the blackboard and ask him to put a scripture reference in it that taught a plurality of drinking vessels, he could not do it. As a result, "the scriptures teach" was not a part of his affirmative proposition. J.D. Phillips, author of *The Cup of The Lord* and *The Voice of One Crying In The Wilderness*, was present for this discussion. Adrian appealed to him by telling how much he loved and revered him as a brother. It was obvious that he



was trying to sway public opinion in his favor. At the conclusion of the debate, however, Brother Phillips asked to speak, which we permitted. He explained that he still believed only one cup could be used in the communion and that individual cups were indeed wrong, and any insinuations to the contrary were misleading. Unfortunately, in later years, Adrian left the churches of Christ altogether and at last report had even renounced his faith in God, and considered himself an atheist/agnostic. Very sad indeed.

### JENKINS-WADE DEBATES

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I first met brother Jess Jenkins in Odessa, Texas, when he debated Ervin Waters on the cups and classes. This was, without doubt, one of the most mismatched debates I ever heard. Ervin was calm, cool and collected and even powerful at times in his presentation and reasoning. He brought years of experience and learning to the occasion. Jess, on the other hand, was obviously in over his head. He was tenacious but unprepared. He could not match either in scholarship or presentation Brother Waters. I moderated for Ervin, which was a great learning experience for me. Unless I am sadly mistaken, even those people who backed Brother Jenkins were able to see that he was greatly outmatched. In June of 1970, Jess and I had the first of our two debates. This one took place in Dallas and Irving, Texas; the second in McAlister-Atoka, Okla. During the Irving debate, Jess had the last speech on the "class or Sunday school question," which was the last speech of the debate. I had previously made the argument that in I Timothy 2:11-12, the phrase, "I permit not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man," contained a negative disjunctive conjunction. In other words, it did not permit two things that were joined together. It did not permit a woman to teach and it did not permit her to have dominion over a man. Jess, on the other hand, contended in his last speech that Paul was really saying he did not "permit a woman to teach over the man." In other words, she could

teach so long as she did not do it in the presence of or over a man. After the debate, I went to Jess and told him that he had ignored the thrust of my argument and the fact that there were two things that were not permitted. He replied, "When you made that argument my moderator told me that you were right about the negative disjunctive conjunction." Unfortunately, however, he conveniently overlooked it in his speech. I remembered that in our debate in Atoka, Okla. In this debate, Jess affirmed the last two nights of the debate on classes. This gave me the last speech. His basic arguments were based on the fact that Paul had commanded the elders in Acts 20 to "feed the flock." Hence, classes were merely a way of feeding the flock. I reminded him that by the same token "sponsoring church arrangements were a way of preaching the word." He, of course, rejected this, claiming there was no scriptural authority for a "sponsoring church arrangement." And since there was no example of it, no scripture authorizing it, it was wrong. Since this applied with equal force to his Bible classes, he had a big problem. So convincing was the parallel that one of the sisters, meeting with the church he represented, came to me after the debate and declared that she would never teach another class or participate in one in any way. To my knowledge, she never did and met with faithful brethren from that point forward. The truth is really simple, yet very powerful.

### **DICKSON-WADE DEBATE**

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The debate with Randy Dickson took place in Kansas City, Kan., June 7-10, 1971. Propositions included a discussion of the number of cups to be used in the communion and the Sunday school question. Brother Dickson was a friendly, outgoing type of person and our discussion was cordial, but at times very pointed. Brother Clovis Cook, who lived in that area, served as my moderator. I asked Brother Dickson the following question: "In the sentence, 'He picked up the cup and drank it, and sighed gustily saying, this is good coffee,' is the word

**cup** a literal container, and what is the antecedent of **this**?” He answered that the word cup was literal and that “this” referred to coffee. By this answer, he completely destroyed his contention that the cup was the fruit of the vine. Jesus took the cup (literal), gave it to His disciples and said, “Drink ye all of it, for **this** is My blood of the New Testament...” The parallel is striking and unavoidable. If he could see that in the first sentence cup was literal and that **this** was a reference to what the cup contained, he should be able to see that Jesus took a **literal cup** and “this is My blood...” referred to the fruit of the vine in the cup. I then asked him, “Is it scriptural to give thanks for the cup before the bread?” He replied, “I think so.” He contended that Jesus did that in Luke 22:20. I pointed out to him that if this is indeed what Jesus did, he failed to do the same, for he and his brethren actually gave thanks for the bread first, then the cup second. His reply was, “It doesn’t matter.” He lived to regret that statement. Time and again I reminded him that according to him it didn’t matter what Jesus did. Try as he would he never was able to get away from that statement. The truth is, it not only matters, it is mandatory that we do what Jesus did. After the debate, and sometime later, Brother Dickson contacted me about another debate to be held in San Diego, Calif., where he was living at the time. I agreed, but before the debate could be planned and executed, Randy suffered heart problems and wrote that it would be necessary to cancel the debate. I responded that I understood and hoped that he would recover his health. I later received the following letter from him:

Dear Ronny,

Thank you for the nice things you said, I must tell you something since I have told it all over the country. When I had to call off our debate, your reply was the most loving and appreciated. I had three more booked, two replied accusing me of not wanting to debate them, and one was too nasty to even tell you. I have in my moments of being in a “valley” thought of your kind message at one of the lowest

times I have ever had.

Ronny, I came to love you very much by the way you debated in KC. If that was the way all debates were conducted, I think there would be more. My prayer today is that God will be more tolerant of our differences, and that if we know each other there, I can see you in that better place. I sincerely believe you are my brother. (No, I do not accept “fellowship in diversity”). Just some that I want to I guess. May God bless you and yours is my prayer.

Yours in Him

George (Randy) Dickson

The above letter touched me deeply. I have honestly tried to treat those in debate just as I wanted to be treated. With but one exception, which I will note later, all of my debates ended with good feelings on both sides. Debating has often been looked down upon because one or both of the men involved failed to manifest the spirit of Christ. Such behavior is uncalled for and is unworthy of the true servants of Christ.

#### **EDDINGS-WADE DEBATE**

Of all the debates in which I took part, this one was the most unusual. Mr. James Eddings was pastor of the Apostolic Pentecostal Church in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Our debate took place in the building of the Wade and Cross St. Church of Christ on October 27 and 28, 1972. The building was packed both nights. The discussion centered around the possession and use of miraculous powers today. Mr. Eddings believed that he had the power to heal people. He claimed to possess the same Holy Spirit in the same measure that the Apostle Paul enjoyed, but he refused to take up a rattlesnake, even though Jesus promised in Mark 16:18 that those who possessed the miraculous measure of the Spirit could do so. His exact words were, “Don’t bring

me any rattlesnakes.” He admitted that the women in his church spoke and taught in the assembly of the church. Yet Paul, possessed with the Holy Spirit, had forbidden women to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). When asked if he had ever failed to heal someone for whom he prayed, he refused to answer. Order prevailed during the discussion and when the debate ended all seemed to be in good humor. To my surprise, sometime after the discussion ended, Mr. Eddings came out with a printed copy of the debate which he planned to distribute. The only problem was he had failed to include any of my charts that were used in the debate and had made no correction in grammar or syntax. When I contacted him about this, I explained that I did not care for him publishing the debate, but I insisted that he include all my charts associated the arguments I had made and that we both correct the copy so that it could be read with understanding. He refused. At this point I, along with Brother Irvin Barnes, visited an attorney in Mountain Home to see if such a publication was legal. He said that he was unfamiliar with copyright laws, but referred me to an attorney in St. Louis, Mo., that specialized in that area of copyright law. I took a copy of the work to this attorney and after looking it over, he said, “Let me write this man a letter.” I returned to Mountain Home and visited with Mr. Eddings. I explained that I had seen the attorney and that he would soon receive a letter from him. I informed him that if he wanted to publish “all” the debate in a grammatically correct form that I would be glad for him to do so, but that the current form was unacceptable. As soon as he received the letter from the lawyer, everything was stopped and I heard no more of it. I really wished that he would have agreed to a fair and accurate publication. Much good, I’m sure, would have come of it. One interesting side note: neither attorney charged me one cent for their advice, work or help in this matter.

## HOLCOMB-WADE DEBATE

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J.W. Holcomb was an unusual man. He lived, worked and preached in the tri-state region that included parts of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. For years, he had a radio program that reached thousands in that area. It would be difficult to estimate the number of people who heard the preaching of the gospel as a result of his efforts. He seemed afraid of no one, challenging any opponent with whom he disagreed. Since there are a number of congregations in that area who worship with one cup and no Sunday school classes, it seemed inevitable that sooner or later there would be a clash between them and Brother Holcomb. Brother Orville Lee Smith had been preaching in Kentucky and the brethren at some point contacted him about a debate with Brother Holcomb. As arrangements for that discussion proceeded, it became evident that Brother Smith would not be able to come for the debate and the brethren at Beatyville contacted me to see if I could come. I later received a letter from Brother Holcomb containing propositions and suggested dates. As a result of our correspondence, the dates and place where the debate would be held were set. For a period of time before the debate, Brother Holcomb boasted about what he would do with me once we had the discussion. "The bigger they are the harder they fall," he said. To say that he planned to mop the floor with me would be putting it mildly. The debate took place on November 26-27, 1976, at the Court House in Beatyville, Ky. The first night, the house was literally packed. Holcomb had a stellar reputation in that part of the state. Some people had followed him for years on the radio as well as in gospel meetings. I began the debate in the affirmative. Methodically, I presented chart after chart showing why I believed one cup was taught in the scriptures. Holcomb's reply was bombastic. At the outset, it was evident that he intended to "run me and the one cup bunch out of the country." Unfortunately for him, he had two major problems. First of all, he didn't have the truth, and second, he was very careless in his assumptions and arguments. Almost from the start he was in trouble. He misquoted the authori-

ties and at times it was evident he didn't even understand what they were saying. He also took a position I had never heard any preacher of the Church of Christ take. He said that it was a sin to use one cup. All preachers of their group with whom I had contact believed that one cup was scriptural, but not necessary. Not Holcomb. He said it was wrong. I asked him the following question, "Will a congregation using one cup (drinking vessel) in the communion be lost for so doing?" He answered, "Yes." By the second night, feelings were beginning to emerge that indicated possible trouble. One brother came to me and told me he had heard Brother Holcomb say that he could worship with one cup without sinning, but did not think one cup was necessary. When I brought this into the debate, he stood up and denied it. The brother who had heard him stood up and confirmed it. It looked for a minute as though everything would break loose. Men all over the audience turned in their seats staring and by their actions indicated that they were ready to rise up as well. My moderator (Lynwood Smith) stood up and called for a point of order. Soon everyone settled down and we proceeded with the debate. What we didn't know at that time was that six of his (Brother Holcomb's) brethren had brought loaded pistols to the meeting that night. God only knows how close we came to real trouble. Another question that created problems for him concerned the universal church. I asked him, "In what way, if any, does the universal church worship, only through means of local congregations or through some function of the universal church itself?" He answered, "Both." He was in a real bind here. Did the universal church sing? If so, how? Did the universal church assemble? If so, how and where? It was mistakes like this that became his downfall. With all due respect to Brother Holcomb, he was the most arrogant, bombastic man I ever met in debate. He refused to admit his mistakes even when it was evident to all that he had made one. He ignored the fact that he totally misrepresented some of the authorities he was quoting. I soon realized why he had made the request in his first letter to me about reports of the debate.

He had written, "I also want us to agree that no article, as a review of the debate, nor any reference be made in such articles to the debate without the consent of both disputants." I never agreed to this, but clearly see why he would want it that way. Our agreement called for another debate on the Sunday school issue at a later date, but I never heard another word from him after the debate. I think he realized that he had fallen flat on his face. If he didn't, I know for sure some of his own people realized it.

### MORGAN-WADE DEBATE

In July of 1975, I received the following letter dated July 18, 1975:

Dear Bro. Wade,

Before writing another word, let me say that I consider you a brother in Christ, though erring. I have heard you a few times on TV and consider you able and anxious about truth. I would enjoy meeting you in public discussion on the class question including women teachers for children and girls and, if your convictions are so, on uninspired literature for teaching purposes. I would like two nights, one for my affirmative and one for yours. Are you interested? Finding a place which is desirous will be difficult and as yet no such place is known to me but we can work on it and perhaps this fall or winter we can discuss this issue. If you could be shown your mistake, I feel a great talent could be channeled correctly. I do not make this as a smart-aleck remark but simply to show my sincerity.

Yours for the one way

Boyd E. Morgan

This letter set in motion the arrangements that eventually led to my debate with Brother Morgan. Boyd Morgan was the quintessential Church of Christ gospel preacher. He was somewhat advanced in



years when we met in debate on October 27-28, 1975, in Gassville, Ark. The building was literally filled to capacity, and most of the people were those who supported and believed as Brother Morgan did. Brother Clovis Cook, my moderator, and I had arrived earlier. When Brother Morgan arrived in the building, every head turned and watched him as he walked slowly down the center aisle greeting and shaking hands with people as he made his way to the front. I knew right away that if this were a popularity contest, I had lost and the real battle hadn't even started. Most, if not all, the people present were regular viewers of our television program, *Let The Bible Speak*. Many of them had watched me for years and were familiar with my belief regarding individual cups and Sunday schools with women teachers. The debate was carried on in good order and appropriate feelings prevailed throughout. Brother Morgan was well prepared and was in every way a skilled defender of what he believed. On one occasion, he chided me for some remark I had made and said, "One of our good women could teach you better than that." In my next speech, I replied, "Why, Brother Morgan, you wouldn't let one of your women teach me better, for you won't allow one of your women to teach a man in your classes." He knew that slip was a mistake and his face showed it. I asked him the following question: "You said last night that a congregation could come together on Lord's Day, arrange in classes and teach the Bible, then, all assemble together in the main auditorium and sing, pray, commune and give, without further teaching. Question: could they commune in the classes where the teaching takes place, then return to the main auditorium and sing, pray, and give, and still be scriptural?" He never answered. In some ways, I feel Boyd Morgan was the best debater it was my privilege to ever meet. Several years later I received a copy of his book *Arkansas Angles* in the mail with the following inscription "To a friend in Christ—Ronnie Wade, from his friend in Christ –Boyd E. Morgan."

## COBB-WADE DEBATE

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I first met Harry Cobb in Birmingham, Ala., where several brethren from various backgrounds in the churches of Christ came together to discuss their differences. I was immediately impressed with his demeanor and ability. He spoke with kindness, yet his manner gave evidence of deep rooted convictions. As time passed, Harry and I became friends through correspondence and chance meetings at various places. When I conducted meetings in the Wedowee, Ala., area, I would always make it a point to visit with him and he usually attended the gospel meetings at Napoleon. As time passed, the suggestion was made that we have a debate and discuss our differences. The arrangements for such a discussion didn't come easy as we had to come up with dates that would fit into our busy schedules. Finally, however, we agreed upon the dates of November 18-19, 1994. The first night would be held in the Napoleon church building with me in the affirmative and the last night at Wedowee in their building with Harry in the affirmative. Harry believed that "the thing Christ had in mind was the fruit of the vine, not the container." He declared that no verse of scripture showed that the "cup" was significant. I replied, "What does it take to show significance?" In every scripture on the subject, the Bible plainly says Christ "took the cup." It could have just as easily said "He took the cups" or "He took the fruit of the vine." It said neither. It said, "He took the cup." I asked Harry, "When Jesus said, "This is My blood of the New Testament (Mt. 26:28), to which of the following did he refer (a) the fruit of the vine contained in the cup, (b) individual communion cups, (c) the cup which contained the fruit of the vine?" Harry replied, "None, He had reference to the cup He asked His Father to remove from Him." But this could not be for that statement was a reference to the impending suffering He was to undergo, and "cup" was used figuratively to represent His suffering. When I asked, "Do you believe Jesus used more than one container in the institution of the Lord's Supper?" He replied, "Yes, I do," yet offered no proof. The debate was well attended. Harry was

I received the following e-mail that was written by one of his brethren. I do not include it because of the nice things he says about me, but because it shows debates can be carried out without feelings of bitterness.

“Hey Steven, you mentioned Ronny Wade in your post. I met brother Wade about 15+ years ago. For some time corresponded, spoke by phone, and I was able to attend some of his debates and similar happenings. In all my dealings with Ronny Wade I can honestly say that he was one of the most respectable Christian men I’ve ever met. The great thing about Ronny Wade is that, even in the most heated debates, he never failed to conduct himself in a Christ-like manner. I’ve heard and watched many of his debates on cassette and video. He even sent me a box full of reel-to-reel debates on the cup and class questions. I’ve watched and listened as opponents chastised him, called him names, etc., even making mockery of him, but in all Ronny Wade held his ground as a devoted Christian man. I guess that is why it pains me in some way to hear brethren chastise those brethren who practice and/or teach something different, let alone accuse them of sin. I can honestly say that I have met few men, if any, who were anymore sincere and devoted to the Lord as I believe Ronny Wade has been through the years. I grew up in a congregation that uses multiple containers, but no classes or “located preacher.” The only difference between us and those Ronny Wade works with was the container issue. Another brother who worked among us, Harry Cobb, has also been among my most admired men of God here. Though I disagree with Harry on several matters, I have always admired his life of devoted service to God and his fellow man. Who could have predicted that some day Ronny Wade and Harry Cobb would debate the container issue? It happened just down the road from here a few years ago. I don’t know how many debates I have here, written, recorded, VCR, cassette, etc., but I would suppose that my collection approaches 100. When Ronny Wade and Harry Cobb met in debate it was the most honorable and godly debate I ever heard! No other

debate even comes close. I was blessed with being able to sit and listen to two men of God discuss a difference in the most humble and Christ-like manner ever, and it was a good debate. It was one of the most, if not the most, focused debates I'd ever heard. There was not one personal attack. Rather, both men praised the other throughout the debate for their life and conduct. Both men are friends. Though these two men stand on opposite ends of the cup issue, they nevertheless share a common understanding on many issues. Several times while I was with Harry, he would tell me that "Ronny called and..." They constantly shared information, debate notes, etc. If only all debates public, and even private discussions, could be conducted in the same manner which these two men confronted their differences, who knows how much good could have been accomplished during the years of frequent discussions. Ronny Wade taught me much about the container issue, but even more about the life of Christ. He is a remarkable man and I am thankful for the time he gave to me and the example he always displayed in public debates. Glad you mentioned his name. It brought back many wonderful memories of years past.

Marty"

#### **WADE-WHITE DEBATE**

This debate came about in a very unusual manner. I was in a meeting in the Atlanta, Ga., area and one day, along with Brother Gene Grant, we set out to find the grave of Brother Clarence Teurman, who many years before had lived in Union City, Ga. He lost his life in a fire that was caused by gas used to operate the printing equipment with which the Apostolic Way was printed. Arriving in Union City, we went directly to the cemetery but were unable to locate the grave. In the distance I saw a Church of Christ church building, and I suggested to Gene that we go and see if anyone there might know the location of the cemetery or grave of Brother Teurman. We soon located a house next to the church building which we supposed was the

residence of the local preacher. We were correct and asked the man, a Brother Robert White, if he had any knowledge of where we might find the cemetery? He didn't, but wanted to know who we were and what we believed. We told him and to my amazement, before we left, he challenged for a debate on the cups and classes. This set in motion a series of letters that resulted in the debate that was held in the high school auditorium at Fayetteville, Ga., November 25-28, 1987. Brother White insisted on a rather unusual format for the debate. He wanted, instead of two thirty minute speeches each night by each participant, a format that allowed for a twenty minute affirmative followed by a five minute cross-examination of the affirmative, followed by a twenty minute negative, then, two more twenty minute affirmative and negative speeches each night. At first, I was somewhat reluctant to accept such an arrangement, but finally agreed to it. In the final analysis, it turned out quite well. The first night when we arrived for the debate, there were very few people there. Most of them were our brethren. In fact, Brother White hardly had anyone there. His own moderator didn't even show up. Brother Clovis Cook, my moderator, had to keep time for him. As the debate progressed, crowds improved and everything turned out quite well. In my cross examination of his first affirmative speech on individual cups, I asked the following questions:

1. Does "cup" in Mt. 26:27 mean a drinking vessel? His answer, "Yes."
2. Is it scriptural to give thanks for the cup first and the bread last? His answer, "No."
3. Would it be possible for several people to divide the contents of a single cup by all drinking from the cup? His answer, "Yes."
4. Is there an example of a congregation using individual cups in the N.T.? His answer, "No."
5. Do the scriptures command the use of individual cups? His an-

swer, “No.”

6. May we use a plurality of loaves in the Lord’s Supper? His answer, “Yes.”

7. If a congregation uses four loaves in the Lord’s Supper which one represents the body of Christ? His answer, “All four.”

8. Did Jesus use one cup when he instituted the Lord’s Supper? His answer, “Yes.”

9. Did the three thousand in Acts 2:41 all partake of one loaf? His answer, “No.”

As you can see, with his answers, it was easy to continue for twenty minutes, after the cross examination, with a negative speech. The idea was his, but it turned out to be an excellent way to bring the subject to focus in a way that otherwise might have been missed. Brother White was an outgoing, personable individual. I enjoyed his company and the discussion we had and felt that in many ways we achieved what many debates fail to produce.

I have had the opportunity to participate in a number of other debates which proved to be profitable in various ways. I mention the above only because each one brings out some thought or principle that I felt worthy of note. The debates with Leon Odom, Julian Snell, Bob Buchanan, A.H. Payne, Don Powell, Roger Jackson and perhaps others were all in their right, sincere efforts to contend earnestly for the faith. It may well be, however, that some of my most notable debates are the ones I never had. I would like to mention just a few of these.

#### HAVENER-WADE DEBATE

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In the chapter on the history of the television program *Let The Bible*

*Speak*, I referred to a proposed debate between myself and a gentleman named Paul Havener. I don't know what ever happened to Paul. I wish I knew. He, of his own accord, had stepped forward and challenged for a debate on both the cups and classes. Feelings at the time were running quite high because of our television program out of Springfield, Mo. Thousands of people were watching it weekly. When I addressed the issues of individual cups and Sunday schools, a firestorm literally erupted. People were up in arms. I am convinced that Brother Havener stepped forward out of sincere dedication. We even had the dates set, April 13-14 and 16-17 (Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday), 1964. On March 10, 1964, he wrote, "From a discussion with two preachers from Springfield who hold to your views and from your T.V. program, I believe the five propositions that I have enclosed represent the differences between us...I live here in Strafford and my phone is RE 6-2277. I will be awaiting your reply. Are you willing to defend your position in the face of controversy?? Yours for the Master, Paul Havener." When I responded that I would be glad to debate him, and signed the propositions he had sent, word of the debate soon began to circulate. As a result, things began to happen. Brethren who believed as Brother Havener rose up with the intent of squelching the debate. Brother Havener suddenly disappeared. I couldn't contact him or find him. He was gone, where I did not know. Apparently, the elders of the church where he labored fired him and sent him on his way. I have often wondered where he went, what ultimately happened to him, but most of all, I have wondered what would have happened if we could have had the debate.

#### **STEVENSON-WADE DEBATE**

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Jeffery Stevenson, preacher for the church in Ceredo, W. Va., contacted me about the possibility of a debate in March of 1982. Since my wife grew up in that area and some of the leaders in this congregation were her relatives, I looked forward to this debate with great antici-

pation. In the beginning of our correspondence, Brother Stevenson seemed willing and eager to debate the issues between us. However, his suggested format for the debate raised some very formidable problems:

### Stevenson's Suggested Format For The Discussion

#### I. First Night: Communion Cups Issue.

##### A. Proposition denied by Stevenson and affirmed by Wade.

1. Wade gives argument (10 minutes)

2. Stevenson replies (10 minutes) This is repeated 3 times

##### B. Proposition affirmed by Stevenson and denied by Wade.\*

1. Stevenson gives argument (10 minutes)

2. Wade replies (10 minutes) This repeated 3 times.

#### II. Second Night: Bible Class Issue

##### A. Proposition denied by Stevenson and affirmed by Wade all night.

B. Wade to give 6 arguments in his individual 10 minute speeches while Stevenson replies to those 6 arguments in his 10 minute speeches.

#### III. Third Night: Bible Class Issue.

##### A. Proposition affirmed by Stevenson and denied by Wade all night.

B. Stevenson to advance 6 arguments in his 6 individual 10 minute speeches while Wade replies to those 6 arguments in his speeches.\*\*

#### IV. Fourth Night: Women Teacher Issue. (Same format as the first night\*)



\*This implies that propositions #1 and #3 will have to be stated both in the affirmative and negative fashion.

\*\*The negative can only use his time to reply to the affirmative's argument or a point of order will be called. This is to keep the speakers on the issue and to help the audience more readily see the inconsistencies (when they arise) of the disputants.

I objected to 10 minute speeches because of the difficulty the time presented in making an argument and following through with it. Essentially, the 10 minute time frame would limit the speech to only one argument. Or if less than 10 minutes were needed, then one could not present a second argument because of lack of time. So I suggested that we have three 20 minute speeches instead. He refused. In fact, he would not budge off his proposed format. It was his way or no way. Through several letters I tried to reason and compromise, but in the end he would have it no other way. I cannot say why, but because of his insistence that only that format could be followed, the debate fell through. I regretted this because I felt this would have been a golden opportunity to present the truth to a group of people with whom I had something in common.

### **KING-WADE DEBATE**

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This is another debate that I really regret we were never able to bring about. Brother Rick King was at the time preaching for the church in Cromona, Ky. Brother Arvil Baker, who lived in that general area, was instrumental in trying to work out the details for the debate. Rick and I agreed upon propositions, dates, and place for the discussion. During our negotiations, however, Rick had to go the hospital due to some illness and the debate had to be postponed. After his recovery, we again proceeded to work out dates. This time one of the churches (the Lily Church of Christ), who was to host part of the debate, backed out and refused to participate. This was no fault of Broth-

er King's. In fact, he was surprised and upset over this matter. This again delayed the debate. After another congregation, among whom Brother King worked, agreed to have the debate, it looked like things would soon work out. However, Brother King came down with serious heart problems that landed him in the hospital again and we had to cancel the debate. After this problem, we were never able to resurrect the debate again. I feel it would have been a good and profitable debate, but it was not to be.

As you can see from the above, there are often various reasons why debates never happen. Both sides, with the best of intentions, are unable to make it happen. We will never know what might have come of the discussions. We can only know we tried and were not permitted to carry through.

Debating has been in the past and continues to be in the present a viable way to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered. In today's world, few people care enough about the sacred word to take it seriously. Even men who claim to be preachers have little inclination to discuss, much less debate or discuss at length, what the Bible teaches. We are the worse for it. Our nation needs a great awakening and return to the principles of truth set forth in the Holy Scriptures; so also does the church. When men cease to care about what the Lord requires, their decline will be downward and swift.

## WHEN GOD DOESN'T HEAR

*Isaiah 59:1-2*

We're glad to be back again tonight and we are certainly glad to have everyone with us. This evening we're going to discuss the subject "When God Doesn't Hear." The reading is taken from Isaiah chapter fifty-nine and verses one through two. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." The manifold sins of Israel had caused God to no longer hear their prayers. The Lord's hand had lost none of its power, nor was He unable to hear.

The indication is that for a long time, Israel had been heaping up a barrier between itself and Jehovah. Their sins had caused God to hide His face from them. It is tragic when God refuses to hear the prayers and pleas of His people. Why would such a thing happen?

There are a number of situations described in the scriptures that result in God no longer hearing the prayers of those who call upon Him. The first one we will notice is: God Doesn't Hear Those Who Regard Iniquity in Their Heart. We read in Psalms 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear me." Regard means to approve, respect, or enjoy, or make allowance for. Wilson says the word means

“to look towards with a favorable aspect.” The idea is that we cannot love, make an alibi for, excuse, or cover up our sins. When we do, the Lord will not hear us. We all sin, but the Bible teaches that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” (1 John 1:9). However, God will not tolerate the love for or practice of sin. We must repent and turn away from wrong doing before He will hear us. When anyone says such things as: “I can’t see anything wrong with taking a little drink now and then,” or “I come to church most of the time, but can’t see anything wrong with missing every so often,” you are trying to excuse what you have done. You are “regarding iniquity in your heart.” So long as that is the case, the Lord will not hear you. There must be in every one of us a hatred for and a rejection of sin.

Secondly, God Doesn’t Hear Those Who Disobey His Word. Prob. 28:9, “He that turns his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” The word abomination means “to be indignant, the object of warmest resentment,” according to Wilson. The Bible stresses a close connection between the Word of God and spiritual prosperity. Psa. 1:1-3 pronounces a blessing on the individual who refuses to walk in the council of the ungodly. “Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Joshua said in chapter 1:3, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” All the promises in the Bible concerning answers to prayer involve in some way a heart that is eager to find the will of God in the Word of God. In John 15:7, we read, “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” 1 John 5:14, “If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.” Psa. 37:4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” One time, a mother wrote in the

flyleaf of her son's Bible when he went away from home, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." How true that is. God just does not hear those who turn away from His law.

One cannot live a life of disobedience and expect the ears of the Almighty to be open to his prayers.

Thirdly, God Doesn't Hear Husbands When They Mistreat Their Wives. 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." In the first seven verses of this chapter, Peter admonishes both wives and husbands about their responsibilities to each other in the marriage relationship. From these verses we learn that husbands are to (1) "dwell with their wives according to knowledge," that knowledge is based on an understanding of the scriptures relating to husband and wife. (2) "Giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel," weaker not spiritually, or intellectually, but physically. She is of a more tender emotional nature than her husband. (3) "As being heirs together of the grace of life," i.e. the free gift of eternal life. The wife has rights equal to those of her husband in this matter. That your prayers be not hindered. If husbands fail to treat their wives with consideration, their prayers will be hindered from reaching the ears of God. A husband cannot mistreat, abuse, ignore his wife's spiritual needs or equality and expect God to listen to him when he prays. One cannot be right with God when his relations with another human being are wrong. This principle is also taught in Mt. 5:23-24.

Fourthly, we learn that God Doesn't Hear A Woman Who Prays Uncovered Or A Man Who Prays Covered. We read in 1 Cor. 11:4-5, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved."

Verse 3, “The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” “Head” in this verse refers to head of authority. God submits to no one, Christ submits to God, man must submit to the authority of Christ, and woman must submit to the authority of man. If a man dishonors his head (of authority), he also dishonors all above his immediate head, i.e. both Christ and God. If a woman dishonors her head (man), she also dishonors not only man, but Christ and God also. People cannot reject an authoritative figure without rejecting the one who placed that authority over them. That is God. Verse 4, “Every man praying or prophesying (lit) having something down from his head” dishonors his head, i.e. he dishonors his spiritual head, which is Christ. If something hangs down from his head, he shames Christ. What is under consideration that hangs down from his head? Verse 14, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” When hair that keeps on growing and hangs down from a man’s head, it is a shame to him and a dishonor to his spiritual head which is Christ. Hence his prayer is hindered. God does not hear those who dishonor both Him and Christ, His Son. Verse 5 says, “Every woman (every sister in Christ) praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head.” The woman of verse 5 is uncovered because of something she chose to do. In other words, this woman’s problem is not because she was not given a covering, for God gave her one according to verse 15. “But if a woman has long hair it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.” Neither is her problem because her covering is inadequate, for had she cared for the covering given her (her long hair), it would have been adequate. Her problem is because of what she has done. What covering will give glory to a woman and keep her from dishonoring her head? According to verse 15, it is her hair which she keeps growing long. She honors or dishonors her head because of something she does. What is it? She dishonors her head (man, and thus Christ and God) when she prays uncovered. She prays uncovered when she trims or cuts her hair. Note: “For that

is one and the same as if her head were shaved.” The scripture plainly says that. This is a serious matter, for all want God to hear us when we pray. All men and women fall into one of two categories: They have 1. hair that is natural length or 2. hair that is not natural length. We either let our hair grow or we don’t let it grow. We either cut it or we don’t cut it. “If a man lets his hair grow long, it is a shame unto him, but if a woman lets her hair grow long, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” Paul did not say “part of her hair is given for a covering, but all her hair.” This is given her “for” or instead of a covering or a veil. According to 1 Cor. 11, men or women can shave, shear, or let the hair grow long. Ezekiel gave the requirements for the Levites who had charge of the sanctuary, in Ezek. 44:20, “Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long, they shall poll their heads.” NKJV says “keep their heads well trimmed.” Long hair is hair that is allowed to grow. It is not polled, clipped, cut, shorn or shaved. Brothers and sisters, do you want God to hear your prayers? If so, you will take heed to what Paul teaches in these verses. This matter is very serious. Many, unfortunately, seem to think otherwise. What a shock they will get when they realize God is not hearing them when they pray. The Bible also teaches that God Doesn’t Hear Us When We Have An Unforgiving Heart. Unforgiveness in the heart of a Christian hinders the answer to his prayers. A grudge, a root of bitterness, or even hate can cause God not to hear. In Mt. 6:9-13, Jesus taught his disciples to pray “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

In verses 14-15, he adds, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” A failure to forgive, holding grudges or enmity against others, may seem to be a very respectable sin. People who would never get drunk, gamble, or steal, people who scorn a lie, are sometimes guilty of this wicked sin. The temptation to this sin attacks preachers and soul winners who might never be tempted to grosser things. How trifling, how insig-

nificant are all the sins that anybody ever committed against us compared to our horrible sins against God all the days of our lives. I have known brother who would not speak to brother. I have seen churches split into factions, homes broken apart, Christians embittered by this horrible sin to the point that they made shipwreck of their lives. The Lord said that forgiveness must be from the heart. To live nominally at peace is not enough. Such statements as, "I will forgive him because it is commanded of me, but I will never have anything more to do with him," or, "I will forgive him but I will never forget it," belie our claim that we have forgiven. God in mercy said, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." If God can forgive and forget, can't we? The reality is, if we want to be like Jesus, we must forgive. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," (Mark 11:24-25). "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Friend, I ask, isn't it time to give it up? Haven't you carried the grudge around too long? Are you better for it? Why not cleanse your heart and conscience, let it go, forgive and forget.

Finally, God Will Not Hear At The Judgment, When Men Are Lost. Mt. 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." Again we read in Mt. 25:10-12, "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with Him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also saying Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, 'Assuredly I say to you I do not know you.'" If you wait until the judgment to pray or cry out to God, it will be too late. Think about it. These verses represent



people who at the very last cried out to God for mercy and salvation. However, it was too late. The time of salvation had passed. They had waited too long. What about you? Where do you stand, sinner friend? Are you prepared right now to meet God? Are you ready? If not, why not come believing, repenting, confessing Christ and submitting to Bible baptism for the remission of your sins? Now is the time. Won't you come while we stand and sing?

## **LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR**

Following is a study of the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Like the church in the city of Corinth, many of these churches were affected by problems existing in the cities themselves. The outside world often infiltrates the church, directly affecting its spiritual welfare. Corinth was a wicked city. The city was both luxurious and licentious. Aphrodite had a renowned temple there to which were attached 1000 priestesses, who were consecrated courtesans. Fornication was openly practiced by the citizens of the city, with a religious connotation. Unfortunately, some of the church members were influenced to believe that such practices were acceptable. Much of Paul's first letter to them was aimed at correcting the problems existing in the church such as division (chapter 1), immorality (chapter 5), and going to law against each other before pagan judges (chapter 6). All of these sins could be traced, in part, to the influence of the conditions existing in the city itself. In much the same way, many of the problems existing in these churches in Asia Minor can be traced to the environment in which the members lived day by day. This important lesson needs to be recognized by congregations everywhere. We are affected by the environment in which we live.

## THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Ephesus was located in west Asia at the mouth of the Cayster River which flowed into the Aegean Sea and was the chief city of the province. Trade from east, west, south, and north met in Ephesus, making it a city of great commercial activity. Since the provincial governor resided here, it was also politically important. Ephesus was also the home of the great temple of Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In 1877, J.T. Wood discovered the ruins of the temple after years of archaeological research. The platform on which the temple stood was 418 by 239 feet, and the temple itself was 342 by 163 feet and had over one hundred columns supporting its roof. In addition, Ephesus had a theater that could accommodate 24,500 persons. It was truly a magnificent city, wealthy and powerful, the meeting place of oriental religions and Greek culture.

The Apostle Paul would have preached here had providence allowed in the early stages of his second missionary tour (Acts 16:6). At the close of the journey on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, he did stop at Ephesus and preached in the synagogue, promising to return (Acts 18:19-20). He later spent three years in Ephesus while on his third tour (Acts 20:31; Chapter 19).

When Paul returned, Acts 19:1:

1. He finds disciples who had been baptized with John's baptism (19:1-3).
2. He teaches them the difference between John's baptism and baptism in the name of Christ.
  - a. John's baptism was conditioned on repentance alone. The baptism commanded by Christ was conditioned on both faith in Christ and repentance from sin (Acts 19:4).
  - b. John's baptism was not administered in Jesus' name. Men are commanded to be baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5).
3. As a result of this teaching, these disciples were baptized into the name of Christ.

The results of Paul's preaching is seen in the events that ensued. Demetrius the silversmith testified to its power and influence when he declared that it was felt throughout almost all Asia (Acts 19:26). The Ephesians believed and burned their books of magic and witchcraft (Acts 19:18-20). They heard the word of truth, trusted and believed (Ephesians 1:13). It was during this extended stay that the church was established (Acts 20:31). According to 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus on two occasions to correct false teachers. No doubt evidence of what Paul warned the Elders about in Acts 20:28. Tradition says that John made this city his home after the death of Paul for many years.

This church is commended by the Lord for its sound faith and works, but is criticized for its waning love. That love, however, could be revived. There was hope.

Unto the angel of the church: The identity of the angel of the church is much controverted. Some believe that it is the messenger to the church, such as a minister, elder, etc., some the entire eldership, some the symbolical representatives of the church, others the spirit of the

church, i.e. its spiritual character. It is probable that some symbolic significance should be understood rather than the identification of some particular person. Regardless of the identity of these “angels,” each church addressed is to hear what the spirit saith to the churches.

It is Jesus who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Holding the stars in His hand indicates His power to determine the destiny of each. The fact that He is in the midst of the churches affirms His presence among them.

I know thy works, and thy toil, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false.

“I know” means to have full knowledge, to know perfectly. Hence, the Lord knows all, nothing is hidden from Him. He knows what goes on in every church, even the behind the scenes events. The political posturing and the struggles for power.

‘Thy works: Works may be good or bad. Here in Ephesus they appear to be good.

Toil and patience: toil signifies strenuous or wearying labor. This labor is accompanied by patient steadfastness under trying circumstances.

Cannot bear evil men: that is they could not bear in their midst the company of those who were morally or ethically evil in their character. Their attitude was if a man is not transformed, then let him be transferred. What a worthy attribute. How about us today? Often, churches try to shield such people.

Try those claiming to be apostles: A city such as Ephesus was bound to get its share of false teachers and men who made false claims. The test was obviously centered around miracles. Miracles were the sign of a true apostle. No false apostle could perform such acts. This is

an attitude every church would do well to adopt. “Try the spirits”, 1 John 4:1. Not everyone should be accepted who claims to be a follower of Christ or preacher of the gospel.

And thou hast patience and didst bear for My name’s sake, and hast not grown weary.

This is another reference to patience. This refers to their ability to persevere under trials and tests. They remained firm and steadfast. Note 1 Cor. 16:12 and 1 Cor. 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord...”

These people were not self-serving nor did they seek the praise of men. They bore their trials for “His name’s sake,” (Matt. 6:1-4).

They did not grow weary. A trait most of us do not have. We often grow tired and are tempted to give up. Pressures and temptations of life get to us. People get old and want to retire from the Lord’s work and leave it to younger men. Is there ever a time to grow weary and retire? Never!

But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

There are seven commendations. But one thing needs to be corrected. They must revive the first love which they have left. We must bear in mind that regardless of the good we do, or the praise and commendation we deserve, if there is fault, IT MUST BE CORRECTED. Love was still there, but “the first love” had been lost. We are not told specifically what this “first love” is.

1. Some feel it was conjugal love like that of the newly married bride.
2. Was it the love demonstrated in the burning of the books, Acts 19:19-20?
3. Was it love such as had been manifested toward Paul in their sor-

row at his leaving them, Acts 20:36-38?

4. Was it love shown one for another in the early years of the church, spoken of in Ephesians 1:15? It may have been one or all of these. The most probable explanation is that these people had lost the original love they had for the Lord, which is the first love of every true church. This love found its expression in all that they did. It must be remembered that this church is in its second or third generation of existence. It was a dangerous time. Often, the early fire of devotion, discovery, and enthusiasm begins to diminish. This should be a warning that all churches would do well to heed.

Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

Remember the point at which they had left their first love. If they can discover and recognize what had happened to them, they can experience this love as at the first. There comes a time when every church should take inventory of its life, work, and practices, such as:

1. Excitement about involvement in the Lord's work.
2. Willingness to become involved in projects for the cause of Christ.
3. Their closeness as a group involving visitation, fellowship, and a sense of belonging.
4. Eagerness to bear one another's burdens and help others as they struggle to live for Christ.
5. Personal growth and commitment.
6. Dedication of time and talents to the work of the church.
7. Opposition to evil men, evil practices, and false teaching.

The warning: I will remove thy candlestick. "It would be removal of the lamp stand, in which the church would be discontinued," (Vine). The lamp stand upheld and dispensed light, but without the motivation of true love, it failed in its purpose and no longer had a right to exist. Repent or be removed. What a sentence! Are there churches today who have suffered this fate? No doubt there are.

But this thou hast, that thou hateth the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Often difficult for us to distinguish between the people who do bad things and the bad things they do. In this case, they hated the "works" of these people, not the people.

The child of God who does not hate wickedness does not love righteousness. We may boast of our love for the truth, but if we fail to hate error and evil practices, we really don't love truth. Little is known about the Nicolaitans, their origin, peculiar doctrines, or what happened to them after the Revelation. They were probably a sect of the Gnostics. Much speculation exists, but little factual information is available. We do know they flourished at Ephesus and Pergamum.

He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The command to hear is basic. It is personal, individual, and involves the acceptance of and compliance with that which is stated. Everyone is to hear what the Spirit said to all the churches. Christ is the speaker, the Spirit in John reveals and records the message.

Those who overcome will be allowed to eat of the tree of life. What we lost by sin in Eden will now be restored in Christ to him that overcomes sin. What a great incentive this is to be faithful and live for Christ. The word Paradise is thought to be of Persian origin, denoting



the parks of Persian kings and nobles. The word is found only three times in our English translations. In Luke 23:43, Jesus used it to refer to that place or realm into which He and one of the malefactors on the cross would be after death; Paul identified it as “the third heaven” unto which he was caught up (1Cor. 12:2-4); and here the Spirit says it is the place of the tree of life, the garden of life where the redeemed will join God for ever and ever.

## LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia was located some twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. Most historians agree that the city was founded by King Attalus II Philadelphus, of Pergamum, who was a great admirer of his brother and predecessor, Ecumenes II. Out of his affection, the king named the city Philadelphia, meaning “brother loving” or “brother lover.” Being located on a main trade route from east to west, the city became an important and wealthy trade center. Philadelphia was also famous for its wines. This gave prominence to Dionysus, the Greek God of the vine and of wine, which became the chief pagan cult of the city. According to Hastings, Philadelphia had so many temples and festivals to pagan deities that it was often called “Little Athens.” The city had originally been established to spread Greek civilization and culture eastward. There is some evidence that this was at least in part successful. Along with other cities in the region, Philadelphia was destroyed by the earthquake of A.D. 17 and was later rebuilt.

The introductory designation by the Lord creates a contrast between Himself and certain situations found in the city. “The Holy” indicates that he possessed the absolute holiness of God. This “holiness” demanded separation from the profane and sinful character so prevalent in the society and culture of that day. “The True” refers to “true, dependable, genuine, real” (Bauer), an attribute possessed by the Lord in contrast to those who “say they are Jews, and they are not,

but do lie.”

“The Key of David...Openeth and none shutteth,...shutteth and none openeth,” a probable reference to the principal problem which confronted the church in Philadelphia. Secular Israel still wielded power and control over Jews religiously, claiming final right of determining who should or should not enter heaven. They not only resisted but denied the claim of Christians that they were the true Israel of God. All Jews, therefore, who accepted Christ were cast out of the synagogue. This passage declares plainly that it is Christ and not Israel who can give men entrance into the messianic kingdom. This expression comes from Isaiah 22:22-25, where the king of Israel deposed Shebna and appointed Eliahim as the chief-steward. The analogy being that Christianity replaced Judaism as the true religion. Thus Christ has undisputed authority to admit or exclude from heaven. The expression “key of David” also means that Christ possessed the throne of David and that the government was upon his shoulder (Isaiah 9:6). The angel declared to Mary the mother of Jesus that God would give her Son “the throne of his father David,” (Luke 1:31-32). Peter on Pentecost referenced the fact that Christ would be raised up to sit on David’s throne, speaking of the resurrection of Christ. Wallace summed it all up when he said, “Jesus has the throne of David, the tabernacle of David, the sure mercies (blessings) of David, and the key of David in every spiritual sense of these terms...These passages teach that the house of David was perpetuated in the kingdom of Christ, his Church.”

“I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.”

“An open door” is a figurative expression denoting opportunity. Just as the city itself was situated geographically to spread Greek civilization, so the church was in a position through evangelism to spread

the gospel. Since Christ had the key of power that declared it open, no man could shut it.

The following qualities would enable the church to take advantage of the opportunity now before them: (1) "I know thou hast a little power." Plummer renders it, "Because thou hast a little power, and hast made good use of that little, I have given thee an opportunity of which none shall deprive thee."

Whether its power was small because of "few members," or "economic status," or "lowly social order," we don't know. What we do know is that its power was sufficient to achieve the purpose the Lord had in mind. (2) "And didst keep My word." The church had stood fast and been true to the Lord. Whatever the trial may have been, this church had proven its fidelity.

And (3) "didst not deny My name." They had confessed the name of Christ (Romans 10:8-10; Phil. 2:9-11) and were obedient to His teachings. To deny Him under the pressure of pagan forces would be to crucify the Son of God afresh. These Christians had remained firm.

"Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

The true Jew was one inwardly, circumcised in heart, (Romans 2:28) a Christian, one who worshiped by the Spirit of God and served Jesus Christ. Those Jews in the flesh, who boasted that they were the true Israel, in fact were not. They hated those who accepted the Lord, and often marked them as traitors and deserters worthy of death. These were of the synagogue of Satan, i.e. Satan was behind their evil deeds.

That they would come and worship before the feet of the Christians means that they would come to recognize the true power of the church, even though most of them would never obey the gospel.

They would hate the Christians, yet they would come to recognize the truth of their claim, and in so doing would come to know “that I have loved thee.”

“Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

“The word of My patience” refers to the patience of Christ out of which grew His word. They had kept His word. They were faithful to it. And because of this, they were given the following promise from Him.

“I will also keep thee from the hour of trial.” “Hour” is probably used to denote a “period of time,” or “a season of persecution.” “From” the hour of trial literally means “from out of the midst of.” It is unclear, however, whether they will be kept from it in the sense that they will receive “immunity from” or “be brought safely through” the anticipated ordeal.

The trial was to come upon the whole inhabited earth and would test “them that dwell upon the earth.” “The Earth” is probably a reference to the world of the unregenerate, those living in sin who are in conflict with Christ and His Church. Even though the Church will have its trials and troubles, it will be kept from those which would affect the people of the world (Homer Hailey).

I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.

The second coming is not under consideration here, but to the constant and continual comings of the Lord, in a figurative sense, to aid His people or judge the sinful world.

“Hold fast that which thou hast” is an admonition to hold on to: the open door, His Word, a little power, steadfast endurance, and the promise from the Lord that He would care for them. The promise

that the Lord would care for them is based upon their continued steadfastness.

“That no one take thy crown” is not an indication that one can gain by taking the crown of another, but that one can lose his crown by carelessness or disobedience. The Lord does not criticize this church, but does warn them that the position they occupy could become the cause of their stumbling. Remember 1 Cor. 10:12, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” To forfeit the crown would be to lose eternal life.

He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.

This promise is personal to every individual Christian who overcomes. He speaks of those who conquer earth’s allurements and temptations.

Making one a pillar addresses the permanence of his/her position in the heavenly temple of God. What a blessing and promise. In the sanctuary of this promise neither earthquakes, violence, nor persecution can ever destroy or cast them out.

Each saint has inscribed upon him three names: (1) “The name of God the Father, to whom the individual would now belong in a permanent and fixed way” (Hailey). (2) The name of the New Jerusalem identifies the victorious Christian as a resident of this city. Heaven is now home. With this inscription upon him, the one who overcomes has a right to enter by the gates into the city, to dwell forever with God. And finally, (3) Christ’s own new name, the name written “which no one knoweth but himself,” (Rev. 19:12). What a glorious promise this is. We are to share in the glory which is Christ’s. His name stands for all that He is, even for all which we do not under-

stand at this time. “When Christ shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory,” (Col. 3:4) and “we know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is,” (1 Jno. 3:2).

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

This is all we know of the church in Philadelphia. The Bible is silent as to its origin and place among the churches. It deserved no criticism or condemnation. This was a church with opportunity, duty, victory, and one that attained to that sought by David, a permanent place in the temple of God (Psalms 27:4). “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” A church whose faithful members were given the name which belongs to God, His city, and His Christ. What a church!

## LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

A present day village named Sart, with a few run-down huts, is all that remains of the once proud capital of Lydia. Sardis was located about thirty miles south-southeast of Thyatira, lying at the foot of Mt. Timolus and about three miles south of the Hermus River. "It was one of the oldest and most renowned cities of Asia Minor. The city had been built on a smooth, almost perpendicular rock hill that provided a natural citadel, inaccessible from three sides and easily protected on the fourth. Rising fifteen hundred feet from the plain below, the hill overlooked the wide and fertile Hermus Valley (Hailley). Ramsey says of the city, "It was more of a robber's stronghold than an abode of civilized men," (Seven Churches, p. 354). The city's patron deity was Cybele, a nature goddess, but a number of other alters and shrines existed that were used by the people in idolatrous worship. The city had been destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17, but was rebuilt by Tiberius, Emperor of Rome. Some claim that at the time of the writing of this letter, the city had a past, but no future. Swete says, "The church perhaps encountered in Sardis no special danger to her place; but the atmosphere of an old pagan city, heavy with immoral tradition of eight centuries, was unfavorable to the growth of her spiritual life." James Strahan sums up the similarities between the church and the city under four particulars, all of which help us to understand the letter: (1) Each had a name that it lived, but



was dead. (2) Each fulfilled none of its works; both would promise but fail to execute. (3) With each it was watch or be surprised as by a thief; Sardis had been caught napping each time it was taken. (4) It is implied that the garments of the church had been defiled with immorality, for which the city was noted (Hastings, IV. 458).

No mention is made of emperor worship, Jewish or Nicolaitan opposition. The problem suggested at the outset is that while from the outside she appeared to be at peace and working, in reality she was spiritually dead.

The seven spirits are a symbolical reference to the Holy Spirit, the seven angels, a symbolical reference to the messengers to the churches or the spirit or inner life of each church.

“Thou hast a name...,” i.e. has the reputation of being alive, but the Lord sees things as they really are. The church is dead. At first, the church might have been full of zeal and life. But now that is all gone. The church is spiritually dead.

“This means that the people of this church were nominal Christians, professing to live the Christian life,” (Hinds). “The church everyone spoke well of, the perfect model of inoffensive Christianity, unable to distinguish between the peace of well-being and the peace of death,” (Carid).

“Thou art dead” ... What a dreadful sentence of condemnation.

The tragedy of this situation is seen all too often today in churches that have a reputation for being sound in the faith, and actively engaged in works of righteousness, but inwardly they are decaying and dying.

“Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God.”

“Be watchful” may well have stricken a responsive chord in the hearts of these people. Twice the city had fallen because of negligence and carelessness. The Lord had often warned the disciples to watch (Mt. 24:42; Luke 12:39). Vigilance on the part of God’s people is necessary. The adversary seeks to destroy us. Hence, be sober and vigilant.

“The things that remain,” whether of works or persons, must be firmly established.

This also suggests the possibility that even in this church, dead and inactive, there were still some who were trying to do what was right, even though their work was obscure and little noticed. The command is to cultivate the graces that do exist. To nourish whatever love of truth might remain.

“No works perfected before God.” The idea is that the church may well have begun with zeal and high ideals. However, they had not continued or completed those things begun. They had wavered and faltered and fallen by the wayside.

“Remember therefore how thou hadst received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

The Lord appeals to them to “remember”. Memory is such a powerful weapon. Think back to the time when the church was first established. That is the command. It evidently was different then. There was life, excitement, dedication, etc. Ephesus was also told to “remember from whence thou art fallen...” Every church needs to remember and use such to inspire them to return to the “first works.”

“And keep it”, i.e. hold on to it, don’t let it go. The church had to repent of the condition into which it had fallen. Turn things around and get back on the right track. If the church does not change, the Lord will come as a thief, in a time they do not expect. The reference

is not to the second coming, because the Lord will come the second time whether men repent or not, but rather to the coming visitation of judgment upon the church, for the destruction of the enemies of the truth, or for the aid of the church.

“But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.”

There were a few that had not defiled their garments. They were still faithful. Despite the fact that many, if not most all, had so defiled themselves, these few had not. But they had to be careful that they not be overcome (influenced) by the others who had already defected. When churches defect and leave the truth, there are always innocent people who are lost as a result. This also happens when there is trouble or division in a church.

It is worthy to note that in a church where sin abounds, the Lord sees and knows the congregation as individuals and is mindful of each person.

They had not defiled their garment, i.e. they had not participated in the pagan defilement so prevalent at that time. The immorality of the culture in which they lived had not rubbed off on them. They were still keeping themselves unspotted from the world.

“Walk in white...” The promise of eternal life stated in figurative terms, a description of those who are justified.

An important question arises just here: how long can one remain in a church where sin, such as that mentioned in the church at Sardis, and not defile his own garment? First of all, one cannot remain in any situation where he/she is caused to sin by being there. False worship would be an example. Secondly, anyone runs a risk by remaining under the influence of ungodly teaching and practices. Thirdly, one must speak out against such teaching and practice. Silence is not the

answer. However, it appears from this situation that so long as one is not himself sinning, he can continue to worship scripturally in a place even though things are not as they should be.

“He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

The promise is three fold: (1) “Arrayed in white garments.” The meaning is that God will clothe the faithful with perfect purity and all the glory that “white” implies. (2) “Will in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life.” Some believe that the Jews kept a register from which the name of the individual was removed at death. God’s book of life is made up of the righteous, the saved, the redeemed. Others may have been there at one time, but because of sin they have been blotted out. Those who overcome will not be blotted out, but will be found there when the books are opened at the judgment, the clear implication being that the unrighteous will not be found there at that time. (3) “And I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.” Not only is the name there, but God will recognize him by confessing his name. Just as at graduation time the graduating senior is called by name, so God will call our name to receive the crown of life.

Remember Mt. 10:32, “Whosoever confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father in heaven.”

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”

This is the same ending as in previous letters. We must hear, i.e. understand what is being said and then act upon it. To hear and not do is like one beholding his face in a glass and forgetting what manner of man we were.

## THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

Smyrna was located about forty miles north of Ephesus on a rather long gulf with two excellent harbors. It was second only to Ephesus in exports. It was a beautiful city, being surrounded by rolling hills and groves of trees. Some referred to it as the most beautiful city under the sun. Its well-paved streets led past stately buildings and temples. Its acropolis on Mt. Pagas gave the appearance of a crown, which became the symbol of the city. Smyrna became an ally of Rome early in the period of Roman conquest, and as a result enjoyed great prosperity for years. Located here was a shrine to Roma, the Roman goddess, erected by the city as a sign of her fidelity to the empire. There were also temples to Cybele and Zeus, making Smyrna a center of pagan worship. The city claimed to be the first city in Asia: first in beauty, first in literature, first in loyalty to Rome. Smyrna still exists today under the modern name of Izmir, Turkey, second only in importance to Ankara. The origin of the church in this city is unknown, this being the only mention of the city or church in the New Testament.

One of its most notable members was Polycarp, who served as one of its bishops. About A.D. 167, the Roman powers decided they were going to force this man to renounce Christ and worship the Roman emperor or be put to death. Learning of this, he was advised by close friends to leave the city, whereupon he traveled about four miles out into the country to the home of one of the members of the church.

Herod, the chief of police, learned of this and went to the place where he was staying. He knocked on the door and said, "I am here for Polycarp. I am going to arrest him and take him back Smyrna." Polycarp came out and was forced by Herod into a chariot and the trip back to Smyrna began. During the journey, the Chief told him, "When we get to the theatre in Smyrna, if you will deny Jesus Christ to be Lord and God and will confess the Roman emperor as Lord and God, you will live. If you refuse, you will die." When they arrived, the blood-thirsty mob cried, "The Christians to the lions." Lifting his right hand, the crowd silenced, and Polycarp said in a firm voice, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and I will not deny Him now." To which the mob responded, "Polycarp to the lions."

By then, the sun had already set over the beautiful hills of Asia Minor. The law of Rome closed the lions' dens at sunset. What would they do with Polycarp? But one thing was left. They would burn him at the stake. Placing him at the stake they began to tie him. He said, "Don't tie me. He who has stood by me through all these years will stand by me now." As the sparks went upward, the spirit of Polycarp took its flight to God and his ashes went down to the earth from whence they had come.

Polycarp was more alive that day than he had ever been. The story of his death spread throughout the Roman world. It is no surprise that Tertullian in the second century wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

It is unlikely that any of us will ever be tried in such a fashion as this.

These things saith the first and last, who was dead, and lived again.

Because Smyrna claimed to be first and had no rival, the Lord introduces Himself to this church as the first and the last. An indication that His primacy must be recognized by all.

The Lord must always be first. Mt. 6:33, "Seek ye first..."

The first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart..." The church should be first in our lives.

The Lord should be first when we select a companion for marriage. The Lord and church should be first when we give of our means (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Imagine sitting in this congregation when this letter is read for the first time. When these Christians hear these words, they no doubt think of their neighbors, business associates, and fellow laborers, who claimed that Rome was eternal. But here the Lord declares that it is not Rome, not the Roman emperors, not the Roman Senate, but it is the Lord Jesus who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and what's more, He was dead and now alive forever more. A terrible blow to the supremacy of Rome and Caesar.

"I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagoguc of Satan."

The Lord knew the lot of these people who were suffering because of their faith. Nothing is hidden from Him. Tribulation comes from a word describing the tramping of sugar cane to make molasses. The tramping of the feet was the tribulation of the cane. The persecution these people faced was intense and severe. They were poor. Probably because they came from a poorer class of people and also because their loyalty to the Lord would bring them into direct conflict with the paganism of this heathen city, resulting in reprisals from the authorities. Their poverty was offset, however, by a far greater wealth than silver or gold could offer. They were rich in faith, good works, and favor with God. Heavenly citizenship brings abundant blessings. "Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5). "They that will be rich fall into many foolish and hurtful lust," (1 Timothy 6:10). "Hardly shall

a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven...” (Matthew 12:23). So many of God’s people down through the years fit this pattern: poor, but blessed. “The common people heard him gladly...” An additional burden borne by these Christians was the persecution from the Jews. The Jews had a long history of persecuting the church. They crucified the Lord. They persecuted Paul. And now these Asian counterparts blaspheme the Christians of Smyrna. They railed against these people. They were not true Jews, that is, God’s Israel who had been circumcised in heart, who worship God in spirit and truth. Instead, they were a synagogue belonging to Satan. The opposition of these Jews was a work of Satan through his emissaries. Satan works through people. He used Eve to get to Adam, and used Job’s wife in an attempt to get him to curse God.

“Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you in prison, that ye may be tried; and shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.”

These Christians are encouraged to remain faithful and not retreat from the tribulation and problems facing them. Suffering lay ahead for them. Easy for us to read and talk about such things, but it would be very difficult to heed the admonition given in this verse. We today are relatively free from such suffering and persecution.

The devil was behind the evil they would face. He is the:

Accuser of the brethren---Rev.12:9-10

Sifts God’s people as wheat---Luke 22:31

Oppresses by physical suffering--- Acts 10:38

Seeks whom he may devour---1 Peter 5:8

Our enemy---Mt. 13:19



Father of lies---John 8:44

Prince of devils---Mark 3:33

They would be tried in the sense that their faith would be tested. When faith is tested, there would be an attempt by the Devil to get them to deny the Lord. The ten days refer to a period of time, not ten literal days. Whether short or long, it would come to an end. The Lord knew the length of the period but did not reveal it.

Be faithful unto death, that is hold onto the Lord and do not deny the faith. The idea is not “be faithful until you die,” even though that is necessary, but “be faithful even to the point of dying for the Lord.”

A crown of life, a crown of flowers was worn by the pagan worshiper, a crown adorned the patron goddess, as indicated on the coins of the city, and the city had a crown of buildings on the crown-shaped acropolis of Mt. Pagan. All this is nothing compared to the crown of life to be given to the victorious child of God. The Bible describes it in the following terms:

An incorruptible crown---1 Cor. 9:25

The crown of righteousness---2 Tim. 4:8

The crown of life---James 1:12

The crown of glory that fadeth not away---1 Peter 5:4

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.  
He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

What is promised to and expected of the church at Smyrna applies to all churches then and now.

No greater promise could be given. These people entering a period of severe persecution are told that if they overcome they shall not be

hurt of the second death. That is they would not be lost.

Only two alternatives: Crown of life that is eternal life or second death.

Second death has no power over the victor. Rev. 20:6

Second death is lake of fire. Rev. 20:14

Second death is destiny of wicked. Rev. 21:8

The Lord did not utter any words of criticism or condemnation of this suffering church, offering only His love and encouragement. This is proof that Jesus really does care when we are burdened and tried. He sees and knows. He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. He was persecuted, oppressed, tried, and finally killed. He knew what these people were going through.

## THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

Thyatira was a wealthy city located in the northern part of Lydia near the border of Mysia on the Lycas River, some forty miles southeast of Pergamum. The city had been governed by Rome since 190 B.C., being a part of the province of Asia. The city lay in a valley surrounded by gently sloping hills. Even though there was no temple to the emperor, there were at least three temples dedicated to various other gods or goddesses. The city was noted for its trade and manufacturing capabilities, especially its purple dye and dyed garments. It was also noted for its trade guilds, which may have formed some of the basis of the problems found in the church. The guilds were made up of workers from various sectors such as linen, wool, tanners, leather, dyers, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths.

This is the longest of the letters to the seven churches, no doubt because of the seriousness of the problems existing here. We know nothing of the origin of this church, its only mention in scripture being here. We are first introduced to this city and one of its residents in Acts 16:11-15 when Paul converted Lydia, a seller of purple. She was baptized in a river just outside the city of Philippi. Some believe that upon her return home, she became the driving force behind the beginning of the church in that city. This may well be, but there is no evidence to back up such an assertion.

It is the “Son of God” who speaks. His eyes penetrate the corruption existing in the church and His feet are ready to trample and burn to ashes all who yield to the seductive teachings of the wicked Jezebel.

“I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.”

As has been affirmed in the other letters, nothing is hidden from Him who walks among the lamp stands. All is open before His eyes. Works, both good and bad, do not escape His notice. Reading such a commendation, one might well ask, “What could be wrong with a church like that?” However, even though there was love, patience, service, and faith in the church, there was also a disease at work that threatened the very life of the congregation. It was that disease that became the burden of the Lord’s message.

“But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

Was this Jezebel an individual in the church at Thyatira or a symbolical designation given to a segment of the church guilty of the things mentioned? The evidence would seem to point to a specific woman in the church, one with great leadership ability, who had been successful in leading a significant group of Christians astray. Her prototype was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, who led her husband Ahab to serve Baal (1 Kings 16:31). It was this wicked woman who cut off the prophets of Jehovah and encouraged idolatry. Her sins are described as “the whoredoms and witchcraft” of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:22). This was not the actual name of the woman in Thyatira. However, because of the similarity in the sins of the two women, she is so designated. It seems only logical that Jezebel’s teaching would be readily received in this city consisting of many guilds, each of which had its own social festival, embracing various pagan religious elements. This presented a special problem for some Christians. In

order to keep his employment or advance his business, it would seem advantageous to maintain membership in the guild of his particular profession. Could this be done and still maintain loyalty to Christ? It is probable that Jezebel taught a compromising position here, leading people to believe that one could maintain membership without becoming involved in the religious and social activities of the guild. Many, however, found this neither practical nor easy. Faced with this dilemma, they compromised their faith, giving in to temptation, and sinned against the Lord. Today, many are faced with the similar problems in labor unions. The Christian has to decide if the association in that union calls upon him to participate in conduct contrary to the teaching and faith of our Lord. If no principle is violated, there is no wrong. If a principle is violated, there can be no compromising that principle. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," (2 Cor. 6:14). The fornication may have been physical since such often accompanied pagan festivals. However, it would seem probable that "fornication" here should be understood as spiritual fornication or idolatry. Whether physical or spiritual, it is the consequence of Jezebel's teaching and influence upon the church. The tragedy of this situation is that the church "suffered" or allowed it to continue unchallenged and unabated. The lesson is clear. It is not enough to just refrain from such activities. We must oppose them. Teach against them and condemn their existence.

"And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication."

God is kind and long suffering. He wants all to come to repentance. It appears here, however, that God's patience had run out. The obstinate resistance of this woman was as flagrant as her sin. Often people mistake time given them to repent as a sign that all is well. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. 8:11). So it was with Jezebel. She did not want to change. She willeth not to

repent.

“Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works.”

A failure to repent leads to judgment. This woman would be cast into a bed of pain and affliction. Those who had shared in her wicked teachings and practices would suffer the same fate reserved for her. The idea is that the bed into which they are cast is a bed of great tribulation. There is still hope, still time to repent. “Repent of her works” refer to the works that originated in this woman’s evil teaching. Unless the church repented of sharing in that teaching or failing to oppose it, they would share in the inevitable judgment facing her.

“And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.”

Her children refer to those who listened to her and were influenced by her teaching. They practiced what she taught. Hence, they would perish just as she would. Those who had been influenced but had not fully yielded to her teachings should repent. Three groups are considered: 1. Jezebel, the source of the teaching, 2. those who are completely under her teaching, i.e. her children, and 3. those who have been influenced but have not completely succumbed, who can yet be redeemed. The latter were to be cast into a bed of tribulation, but not killed with death.

The important lesson for all is that God does not condone sin, neither can we. He does not tolerate it, and those who do will suffer grave consequences because of their spineless disposition.

“Reins” literally means kidneys, but figuratively refers to “the seat of the deepest emotions and affections of man, which God alone can fully know” (ISBE). The idea is that God searches and knows the

whole inner man. Nothing is hidden from Him.

Notice how the message becomes personal... “I will give unto each one of you.” Each of us stands alone before God. We are responsible for our inner person as well as our outward behavior. God knows all and will deal with us individually. Every person in Thyatira had to account for himself as to his relationship to this terrible woman and her ungodly teaching.

“But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say, I cast upon you none other burden.”

The false teachers in this church were in pursuit of the “deep things of Satan.” The Lord here identifies the source of this teaching. It came from Satan. Some think that these teachers may have been a sect of the Gnostics. Some such sects taught that in order for one to understand Satanic doctrine and life, the individual should experience first hand those things practiced by the cult. The idea being that such an experience would not affect the spirit but only the flesh. Peter warned against such teachers, “For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error,” (2 Peter 2:18). The fallacy of such teaching is seen in the fact that one does not have to murder in order to understand it. Neither does one have to commit fornication in order to know what it is.

The phrase “I cast no other burden” refers to their obligation to keep the faith and maintain moral character. The Lord required of them only that which was necessary, nothing more or less.

“Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come.”

The Christians are encouraged to hold on to the moral life required of them as the children of God. “Till I come” does not refer to the

“second coming” but rather a coming to aid or judge the church.

“And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My work unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations.”

The addressed are those who overcome the Jezebel threat and keep the faith by doing the commandments of God. “Unto the end” just means that there is no place to slow down or quit in serving the Lord. One can never give up. That is not an option and should not be in our vocabulary.

“To him will I give authority and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father.”

The idea is that God raised Christ to sit on the throne. To the Son was given the nations over which He should rule with a rod of iron (Psalms 2:7-9). Here, those who overcome, and keep His works, are said to share that rule with Him. The rule is spiritual through the gospel or revealed truth.

“And I will give him the morning star.”

Hailey says, “The meaning seems to be that as the morning star, one of the brightest in the heavens, heralds the approach of dawn and a new day, so Christ here promises that He will give to the conqueror a new day; the night is almost over.” These Christians should take heart. Victory is ahead for the faithful.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”

Hearing necessitates an ear for spiritual truths. Some have it, others have grown “dull of hearing.” Hearing is personal and individual, involving a willingness to accept and comply with what is said.



## LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

The city of Laodicea was located between forty and fifty miles southeast of Philadelphia and some ninety miles east of Ephesus. It was one of three cities situated in the Lycus valley, eleven miles west of Colosse and six miles south of Hierapolis. It was founded by Antiochus II, who named the city after his wife. Laodicea became a center of Hellenic culture and was at the peak of its importance when Asia was made a Roman province in 190 B.C.

The city was a center of imperial worship and received the coveted recognition of the temple wardenship. Located thirteen miles from the city was a noted school of medicine. This school developed an eye medicine known as Phrygian powder, which became widely used and added to the fame of the city. The surrounding area was also famous for a special breed of sheep that produced soft, glossy, black wool used in highly sought garments.

Laodicea was also a banking center of no small importance, which contributed to the overall wealth of the area. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60 and took responsibility for its own reconstruction, refusing help from Rome. Ramsey describes the city as one with no extremes, one that had no peculiar characteristics unless this lack of peculiar characteristics was its peculiar characteristic. Because of the opulent lifestyle, the city was an appealing retirement

center for the wealthy. Many of the characteristics of the city also seem to be reflected in the church.

The origin of the church is unknown. It may well be from what is said in Acts 19:10 that it had its beginning during Paul's stay in Ephesus. The letter begins, "These things says the Amen, The faithful and true witness." "Amen," the Hebrew meaning is akin to "truth," and is intended to express certainty or lack of doubt. The idea being that the name of Jesus the Christ guarantees all that He says. It is a testimony to the absolute faithfulness of His message.

The faithful and true witness is an indication that Christ is trustworthy and that He is in a position to judge and criticize. This being the case, what He says should be heeded. Trench said there were three things necessary for one to be a witness: (1) He must have first-hand knowledge of that to which he testifies and must have seen with his eyes that to which he attests; (2) He must be competent to reproduce and relate this for others; and (3) He must be willing to make this known faithfully and truthfully. The Lord completely fulfills these essentials.

"The beginning of the creation of God." The meaning is that Christ is the source of all created beings and things. He was the active agent of God in creation. It was through Christ that all things were made. John 1:1-2, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God..." Verse 14, the word was made flesh.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." The Lord knew this church. He knew its works. He was aware of its spiritual temperature. It was neither cold nor hot. Cold means "cold, chilled, or chilly," the same word is used in Mt. 10:42 of a cup of cold water. Hot is from a word meaning to boil or be hot, fervent. This church was neither. The Lord expresses a deep regret at this condition when He says, "I would that thou wert either cold or hot," (Trench). The idea is that Christ wanted them to be something other than lukewarm. He did not want them to be

cold in the sense that they would never come under the power of the Word. The clear indication being that belief in God and His work is something to be fervent and earnest about.

“So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth.” Thayer says that lukewarm means, “to become warm, liquefy, melt.” The metaphor here used indicates a condition that caused nausea. A hot or cold beverage might refresh; but a lukewarm liquid only produces nausea and vomiting. When passing from a cold to a hot beverage it goes through a lukewarm state. Here, however, the condition was becoming permanent. These people had remained in that condition. Because of that, the Lord is about to spew or vomit them out. There is hope, however, if they will change. And thus, the Lord makes a plea for a change on their part.

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked.” Here we see the result of their lukewarm state. This church was deluded. The worst thing being that they were unaware of their deplorable condition. Think of it. There was plenty of money, but they were poor; there was plenty of the finest clothing on earth, but they were naked; there was healing for many in the medical school, but they were blind. What a sad commentary. And in the face of all this, they boasted of their riches and professed to need nothing, yet they were the neediest of all.

Such a description is fitting of far too many churches today. They have fine buildings, and programs, all kinds of projects; they live in comfort and worldly enjoyment that requires neither sacrifice nor effort. They feel sufficient unto themselves. But like Laodicea, they are in a deplorable condition.

The church in Smyrna was the “poor rich” church; this congregation was the “rich poor” one. Five adjectives are used to describe the plight of this church: 1. the wretched one--same word used to describe one

relying on his own resources for deliverance under the law, 2. and miserable---same word used by Paul to describe one who has hope only in this world, but no hope beyond, 3. poor---reduced to begging or a state of dependence on others for support, 4. blind---Peter used this word to describe those who had forgotten they were cleansed from their old sins, 2 Pet. 1:9, 5:5, and naked---describes the soul without the heavenly habitation, 2 Cor. 5:2, one who is divested of any covering before the Lord.

This is a pathetic picture of a church that has lost touch with themselves and God.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.” As a friend, the Lord gives advice. That is the meaning of “I counsel thee.” Buy of me gold---this gold could come only from the Lord, since all spiritual riches and blessings are from above. This would compensate for their spiritual poverty.

The banks of Laodicea could not provide the benefits they needed. They are to buy white garments, which are garments of holiness. Again, Christ is the only source of such garments. Buy is here used metaphorically. The buying was done by their obedience to the Lord’s commands. Eye salve was necessary that they might see. They were blind to their own faults. Materialistic and worldly interests blurred their vision. They needed enlightenment that only the Lord could give. We should always remember, “The things that are seen are temporal but the things that are not seen are eternal.”

“As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.” It is because of love that Christ chastens and reproveth us. Regardless of our attitude and feelings toward Him, the Lord always has an affectionate feeling for the church. “As many” is an indication

that this rebuke extends to anyone and everyone who needs it. The Lord corrects or disciplines those whom He loves. The word implies a rebuke that carries conviction even to the extent of punishment if necessary. To chasten implies correction and training in the moral and spiritual area of ones life. We should never regard lightly what the Lord says to us by way of rebuke. Such reproof is for our benefit and spiritual well being. We are admonished to repent. Being zealous is a call for an immediate turn around. Should such repentance take place, the church could be what the Lord wanted it to be. So could we all.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Literally, “See I have taken my stand upon your threshold, and I am continually knocking.” Christ is here represented as loving even the lukewarm, indifferent church member. And even though by the lives they were living He had been excluded from their presence, He still wants entrance to their lives. They may have closed the door, but He had not. G. Campbell Morgan paraphrased the meaning this way:

“He waits for a man. He is not waiting for a committee to pass a resolution. If any man hear My voice, I will come to him...I will be his guest, I will sup with him. He shall by My guest, and he with Me. I will sit at the table which his love provides, and satisfy My heart. He shall sit at the table which My love provides and satisfy his heart.”

The Lord never forces Himself on anyone, but waits for willing acceptance on the part of the one inside. To hear His voice is to hear more than a sound. It is to understand what He demands, thus acknowledging the Guest who would enter.

“He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.” The promised reward is to the one who overcomes. We cur-

rently sit and reign with Him by sharing with Him in this life and in His victory over sin, and we shall also reign with Him in eternity. Paul declared in 2 Tim. 2:11 that we “live with Him.” This is the sense here.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” The letter is all-inclusive. Let all churches hear: those who overcome reign with Him as they share in His life, suffering, and victory.

## THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM

Pergamum was built on a large, cone-shaped hill overlooking a broad and fertile valley about thirty miles north of Smyrna, some fifteen miles inland from the sea. In 133 B.C., king Attalus III bequeathed the city to Rome. Pergamum was known as the royal city of Asia and served as the political capital of the province for more than two hundred years. The acropolis of Pergamum was adorned with beautiful state buildings. The city boasted of a library of two hundred thousand volumes, second only in size to the one in Alexandria, Egypt. As early as 29 B.C., a temple was erected to Roma and Augustus, at the time being the only temple of the imperial cult in all Asia. The city had the distinction of being three times named temple-warden of the state religion before the honor was transferred to Ephesus. Beside the imperial cult, there were four patron deities of the city, Zeus and Athena of Greek origin, and Dionysus and Aesculapius of Asian origin.

Christianity in Pergamum was challenged by three distinct types of pagan religion: popular Asiatic, cultured Greek, and official Roman. Official Roman or emperor worship was more political than religious. During the reign of Domitian, it was made a test of loyalty to the state.

The sword, recognized by the Romans as a symbol of authority and judgment, belonged in this case to Christ and not Rome.

Heb. 4:12, “For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword...”

Eph. 6:17, the Christian clad, as one of the Lord’s army, is to take “the sword of the Spirit,” which is the word of God. It is with this sword that Christ brings Judgment to those nations and people who reject God and His word.

“I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

Just as the Lord had known the works of the two previous churches, He knows the oppressive conditions under which the church in Pergamum had to live and the great obstacles it had to face. They are encouraged to take confidence in the fact that it is Christ and not Rome who wields the sword.

The significance of “Satan’s throne” is a reference to the conditions in Pergamum at that time. It was the political capital of the province and the seat of pagan deities and emperor worship. All these elements combined to produce an oppressive Satanic atmosphere. The persecution in Smyrna had come from the Jews; here, it is coming from an imperial and pagan source.

They held fast the Lord’s name and did not deny the faith, a great and worthy commendation. These people, in the face of severe opposition, refused to confess “Lord Caesar,” remaining true to the name of the Lord. The name of Christ stands for all he represents:

Deity---He was the Son of God

Authority---“All authority is given unto Me...”

Lordship over all---King of Kings and Lord of Lords



Not denying the faith means that they stood firm for all revealed truth. They stood fast in the faith. “The faith once delivered,” (Jude 3).

Antipas---We know nothing more of this good man. He was a beloved martyr of the Lord. He had been faithful to what he had seen and heard about Jesus. He surely was not the only one who had so suffered, but was probably the first of many. It may be that he was a member of this congregation, i.e. “among you,” or it could have been that he had been brought to Pergamum from another place to stand trial and eventual execution. If that were the case, this church stood beside him during this time.

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.”

The Lord now turns His attention to those things that He condemns in this church. It may well be that only a small minority of the church is guilty of these sins, nevertheless, since “a little leaven can leaven the whole lump,” it is necessary to point out and condemn this wrong. The teaching cannot be tolerated. Such teaching left uncorrected spreads.

A point we should all remember. If only two or three in a church are teaching and practicing things that are contrary to the truth, it must be dealt with before the Lord will approve the church. It may be said of a number of churches, “thou hast some.” Some who deny the plain teaching of scripture about worship, fellowship, work of the Holy Spirit, relationship to unscriptural teaching and worship, etc.

The teaching of Balaam: When Israel came to the border of Moab and Balaam found himself unable to curse the people of God for Barak, king of Moab (Num. 23, 24), he counseled Barak to send forth the daughters of Moab and entice the men to join them in their lascivi-

ous worship (Num. 31:16). In doing this, he was able to accomplish what otherwise he could not have. Balaam's compromise was a tragic mistake. The spirit of compromise in matters of wrong doing is always a mistake. The error of this man is described in the following points: (1) He taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before Israel. This word "stumbling block" identifies that part of a trap on which the bait is placed, which when disturbed causes the trap to spring, thus ensnaring the victim (example: mouse trap-cheese). Balaam set a trap before the children of Israel, causing many of them to perish. The analogy is: some in the church at Pergamum were setting a trap that would eventually ensnare the entire church if not corrected. This is always the result of compromise in such matters. (2) "To eat things sacrificed to idols" involves more than the eating of meats as discussed by Paul in 1 Cor. 8-10. Included was the actual participation in the idolatrous worship itself. (3) "And to commit fornication" describes what was frequently a part of the pagan ceremony. Those who followed the teachings of Balaam and compromised the truth for idolatry made a grievous mistake, one with eternal ramifications. 2 Peter 2:15, "Which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Such mistakes had to be dealt with. "There is no point at which the church can tolerate compromise or wink at sin when the name and faith of the Lord Jesus are involved," (Homer Hailey).

"So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner."

Some claim that the doctrine of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitans are identical. However, the phrase "in like manner" would indicate that they were two separate groups. As we have noted previously, there is little information on the Nicolaitans and their beliefs and practices. It may be that the two groups had some things in common. The difference between the church at Ephesus and Pergamum was

the difference between rejection and compromise. Ephesus hated the deeds of these people. "Some" in Pergamum had taken a compromising position toward their teaching.

"Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth."

The Lord does not tolerate the sin of compromise in the church. With Him, it is always repent or perish. "Repent or else I will come..."

It is important to notice that the command is to the entire church. Those who had adopted the ungodly teaching and practices of Balaam must repent. Those in the church who had manifested a compromising spirit toward this teaching must repent and take a firm stand against it. No church can afford to tolerate such a disposition as that manifested by the few in Pergamum. Such a disposition is characteristic of far too many in the church today. Without doubt, it is responsible for the doctrinal weakness we see in many. The alternative is fearful to contemplate. The Lord will come and make war against the church by executing judgment against those who have compromised. Just as Balaam had been slain by the sword of those whom he sought to curse (Num. 31:8), so these in Pergamum would be dealt with who had reduced the word of God to that of a carnal religion. The judgment of God was so complete that neither the Nicolaitans nor the Balaamites left documents or institutions behind.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written which no one knoweth but him that receiveth it."

This is an illusion to the manna given the children of Israel in the wilderness. The idea being that God abundantly supplied the needs of His people. The feasts in the idol temples could not compare with the feast of one who "eats the bread of life" (John 6:35). Jesus was

the true manna come down from heaven. This manna was “hidden” because it was unknown to the pagan world. It here represents the exclusive spiritual blessings the Lord will give to His faithful servants. So also today that upon which the people of God feed is unknown, overlooked, and unimportant to those of the world. The satisfaction of serving Him remains a mystery to those living in sin.

Interpretations regarding the white stone are almost as numerous as those who write about it. The word “stone” translates a word meaning “a small, worn, smooth stone; pebble.” According to Thayer, in ancient courts of justice the accused were condemned by black pebbles and acquitted by white. This word occurs only one other time in the New Testament, Acts 26:10, where Paul says, “I give my vote (literally, my pebble for voting) against them.” The white stone, perhaps in some way, pertains to the heavenly relationship and privileges these people shared with the Lord. Some think it might have had reference to their complete acquittal before the Lord.

The new name seems to be an indication that only those in the Christian experience really know what God is or what He gives. Those who are redeemed and victorious know what it means to belong to God; others just do not realize what it means to be so blessed.

## **“AND GOD REMEMBERED”**

We invite your attention at this time to Genesis 8:1-4, “Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters decreased. Then the ark rested in the seventh month and seventeenth day of the month on the mountains of Ararat.” These verses give us an insight into the events that happened when God sent the flood that resulted in the destruction of the world of Noah’s day. An interesting statement is made when the scriptures say, “then God remembered Noah...” I want to talk to you today about God remembering. Many of us are rather forgetful. In fact, as we grow older, we have difficulty remembering as we once did. It seems that there are times we remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember. With God, it is not that way. There are many things that God remembers that some people would rather He forget. And there are other things that we all want Him to remember. The Bible tells us that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was a good man among many bad men and his goodness had attracted the attention of God. God purposed to destroy the whole human race because of their wickedness. In fact,

as God looked at the whole of man, it actually repented Him that He had made man. The Lord commanded Noah, this righteous man, to build an ark out of gopher wood. The actual building of the ark took 120 years. During that time, Noah worked and preached. All those years, he proved his faithfulness to God by both what he did and said. Even though people were not listening to him, he continued to preach year after year. Finally, at the appropriate time, God told Noah to enter the ark along with his wife and his three sons and their wives. The door was closed and it soon began to rain. The heavens were opened and the fountains of the deep were unloosed and a mighty flood of waters covered the earth. As the water began to rise, people soon realized that Noah knew what he was talking about. They ran for higher ground until there was no more high ground. Some probably climbed trees, but soon the water reached them there. There was no place to hide, no place where they could run. It was all over for the human race at that time except Noah and his family, who were tucked away safely in the ark. No man on earth was ever more helpless than Noah. He was on a boat without chart or compass or sail or rudder. There was no land to reach even if he could have reached it. Huddled with his small family of eight inside the ark, along with a boat load of animals, this man was adrift on a sea of water with no land in sight. No doubt still lingering in his mind was the horror of the death of millions of human beings who had perished in the flood. He had said good-by to the whole unbelieving, sinful horde. Brothers, sisters, kinsmen, neighbors, friends, acquaintances, and strangers had all chosen to go their way without God, but Noah had chosen differently. What would become of Noah and his little family? Not a piece of ground on which they could put their feet. No where to plant seed, or to grow food, or plant vineyards. There wasn't even a place to build a house. This man was utterly helpless, but "God remembered Noah, and every living thing..." (Genesis 8:1-4). When Noah had no one else to depend upon, he could depend upon God. God remembered. We have a God who remembers, and what a blessing that is.

What if God forgot all of us? What would happen? Where would we be?

Later on, the Bible tells us about the cities of the plain that became very wicked. God saw and determined to destroy them. "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt," (Gen. 19:29). God knew the heart of Abraham, tender with love toward his nephew Lot. Abraham had taken Lot to raise after the death of his brother. The two had become very wealthy and one day a disagreement arose between their herdsmen. Not wanting any trouble, Abraham had appealed to his nephew to select the land he wanted and go his way so that trouble could be avoided. Unfortunately, Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, a wicked city. The wickedness of the place continued to spiral out of control until God determined to destroy it. This concerned Abraham and he pleaded with God to not destroy the city. In fact, Abraham eventually asked God if he could only find ten righteous people in the city, would He spare it. God called to mind the tender pleading of Abraham when he asked that if there were only fifty righteous in the city of Sodom could it be spared, or if not fifty then forty-five, or forty or thirty or twenty or even ten. God agreed if there were only ten He would spare the city. But a careful check of the hearts revealed that not even ten righteous people existed there. There was Lot, Lot who had moved to this horrible place, Lot who had called the vile wretches of Sodom "brethren," Lot, whose wife had grown worldly, whose children had grown up in this ungodly place and were polluted by its sin and evil. Peter declared that Lot was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked and was tormented by their lawless deeds (2 Peter 2:7-8). It may be that God was not thinking so much of Lot as He was "remembering Abraham." He remembered the love Abraham had for Lot, and his tender pleadings. And so God brought Lot out of the wicked city of Sodom. Unfortunately, his wife looked back, however, and turned to a pillar of salt.

On and on, so it is throughout the Bible. God is always remembering His own. God remembered Rachel, the barren wife, when her heart was heavy with longing for a son. Replaced somewhat by her older sister Leah, and troubled in spirit by the fact that she had children and was a comfort to Jacob, yet she was still barren. How many times had she wept in the night? How many times had she prayed to God and cried out for help on this matter? No doubt many times she thought, "Nobody knows and nobody cares about me." But someone did care. God cared. "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and she said, 'God hath taken away my reproach.'" (Gen. 30:22-23). At another time and in another place, another brokenhearted and barren woman, Hannah, in the bitterness of her soul prayed unto the Lord and wept sore and promised God that if He would give her a child, the child would be lent to the Lord forever. God looked on this woman with love and compassion and never did forget her. In 1 Samuel 1:19, we read, "And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house in Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her." So many times in the scripture do we read of God remembering. Let's notice some of the ways in which God remembers today.

First of all, we are told that God Remembers His Own Word. It is a wonderful thing how God remembers. In the Bible, you will repeatedly find where it says, "And God remembered His covenant." Over in Ex. 2:23-25, "And it came to pass in the process of time that the king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." The bondage of Egypt bore heavily upon the Israelites. They cried and wept and groaned. God heard and He cared. His heart was stirred and He remembered His covenant. He sent Moses to tell the people



“And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant,” (Exodus. 6:5). Again in Psalms 105:8, “He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations,” (Psalms 105:41-42). “He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river, for He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant.” Even though the Israelites were a quarreling and doubting people, often rejecting God, God still remembered the promise He made to Abraham about them. It becomes apparent that to God His word is a most solemn thing, never to be forgotten. No wonder we are told, “Forever, O Lord, Thy word is sealed in heaven.” “The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God shall stand forever,” (Isaiah 40:8). On another occasion, God said in Genesis 9:11, “Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God even placed a bow in the clouds to remind Him of the covenant He had made about the flood and any future destruction. We may think it doesn’t matter what we do or believe, but God remembers His word. We may read and forget, or read and think it not important, but God remembers. God remembers the works of flesh named and listed in Gal. 5:19. We may ignore these sins and think we can escape by doing what He forbids, but God remembers. Friend, read your Bible. You may have difficulty remembering what you read there, but don’t forget that God remembers every word. You may think it doesn’t matter, that what is in that book was written years ago, but God doesn’t forget His covenant or His word.

God Remembers All His People. We have already seen how God remembered Noah, Abraham, Rachel and Hannah, but what about His people today? “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow

is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Mt. 6:28-30). God knows more about us than we sometimes want to admit. The very hairs of your head are numbered (Mt. 10:30). Do you know how many? Probably not, but God does. Even when we give a cup of cold water in His name, He remembers (Mt. 10:42). The widow who gave two mites, He remembered. Mary, who anointed Him with precious ointment, He remembered and declared that the deed would be known wherever the gospel was preached (Mt. 26:13). The Hebrew writer called to mind the sorrows and patience and labors of those addressed in this epistle and said, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister." (Heb. 6:10). God never forgets good deeds. Others may never know the good you do for people, but God does. He remembers our kind words of encouragement, helping the poor, or visiting someone in the hospital, nursing home or a shut-in, God remembers all. Sometimes we grow to feel that God is unaware of the sacrifices we make or the good deeds we do, or the hard work we donate, but He does.

God also Remembers Our Sorrows. Many times we have a tendency to forget the sorrows of others. God, on the other hand, has made provisions so that He never forgets the tears of His own. David cried, "You number my wanderings, put my tears into Thy bottle, are they not in Thy book?" We are told that this psalm was written when the Philistines took David in Gath. He was in great danger and his heart was troubled. He cried out to God, "Lord, You keep account, a record of all my wanderings, You put my tears in Your bottle (that is you store them up in your memory) as one who writes them down or keeps a record of them in a book." Even though there are times when it seems as though God has forgotten, He has not. It may have seemed that way to Joseph in Potiphar's jail, or Jeremiah in the slime pit, or Paul and Barnabas who were in prison at Philippi, or to you who feel forsaken, alone, wronged or oppressed. But rest assured He

has put your tears in His bottle and written them down in His book. God remembers. God hears the prayers of his saints. Rev. 5:8, “Now when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints,” (Rev. 8:3-4). “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the alter. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden alter which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.” These verses indicate how God regards the prayers of His people. How gladly we ought to pray, and how meekly and patiently we ought to wait on God for the answer since He regards our prayers as so precious. Friend, do you pray often? Do you realize how much your prayers mean to God? God does keep records (Mal. 3:16-17). Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him. For them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.” My friend, are you a jewel of God? Are you one of His? If so, He knows and remembers you and all your cares and burdens.

God Also Remembers The Sins of The Impenitent. God remembers sin and bides His time, but is certain to bring sin to judgment. God cannot forget unforgiven, unrepented, and unlamented sin. God has warned that sin must come to judgment. Prov. 13:15, “The way of the transgressor is hard...” The very nature of sin leads one to live a hard and difficult life. Often Christians look at sinners and think that the individual is living a joyful and carefree life. But not so. Sin carries a high price tag. The scripture says in Num. 32:23, “Be sure your sin will find you out...” (Sin could not find us out if God didn’t remember our sin). Paul in Gal. 6:7 reminds us, “Be not deceived. God is not mocked for whatsoever a man sows he shall also reap.” (How

could men reap what they sowed, if God didn't remember?) The Bible even says that man shall give account of every idle word that they speak (Mt. 12:36). God keeps a record. In Hosea 9:9 we read, "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah; therefore, He will remember their iniquity, He will visit their sins." Rev. 16:19, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God; to give unto her the cup of wine of the fierceness of His wrath." Notice carefully that the scripture affirms that this wicked city "came in remembrance before God." Today you, your sins, the sins of this great nation and of every nation on earth, come before God. God knows and He remembers. How terrible is the memory of God, when it is the memory of justice and judgment? Some people seem to think that they will get by with their sin. That God will forget or pass it by, but not so. He knows who committed the murders that the police do not. He knows who killed the innocent little girl or boy. He knows about the husband that abuses his wife and children. He knows who robbed you or destroyed your property, even when you or the authorities do not. God keeps a record, He remembers. Yes, God remembers, but He also forgets. Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." God forgets sins that are blotted out, sins that are forgiven. Jeremiah 31:33-34, "For they shall all know me from the least to the greatest, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The Hebrew writer assures us in Heb. 8:12, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The God who remembers the sins of thousands, forgets the sins of all who come to Him in repentance and obedience. One time there was a man sick and dying in a hospital. A friend asked him again and again, "Is there anything that I can do for you?" Over and over came the reply, "There is nothing." One day as he was near death he again asked that question. No nothing came the reply, nothing that anybody can do, but I want to know

is there anybody that can UN DO? The anguish of sin and a wasted life haunted him. He wanted someone who could undo the deeds of the past. Jesus can do that. He can undo what no one else can. He can forgive sins and they will be carried away. Sin is a damaging and terrible thing. It hangs over the sinner as a heavy cloud, a horrible burden. Thanks be to God our Father who not only remembers, but also forgets our sins when we come in repentance and humble obedience to His commands. I may be talking to someone today who worries over the private sins of your life. You shudder to think of what might happen if someone found out. God already knows, but you have failed to settle the account with Him. Why go on worrying? Why hide from reality when you can come to Him in obedience and have the page wiped clean? Has God forgotten your sins, or do they still hang over you like a heavy cloud? You can be forgiven; you don't have to remain separated from God. He will wash your sins away in the waters of baptism. Acts 22:16, "And now why do you tarry, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord." Won't you do that today? In the Bible, we have examples of people whose past was sinful and evil. They realized the need to change and avail themselves of the redeeming blood of Christ. There was Paul who had persecuted the church, even binding and throwing saints into jail. Yet by his own word, "He obtained mercy." He considered himself, "The chief of sinners," yet he was forgiven. Simon, who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 8, was told to repent and pray God if the thought of his heart might be forgiven. He asked Peter to "pray to the Lord for me." You can change things in your life today as well. God will forget your sins when you come in humble obedience to his will. As we stand and sing, won't you come?

## BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS

Delivered to the High School Graduating Class of Eureka Springs,  
Arkansas 1971

The Fourfold Growth of Jesus

Luke 2:52

### INTRODUCTION:

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- A. Today you have reached an important milestone.
- B. You currently stand at sea level, which way will you go?
- C. There are many decisions facing you:
  - 1. About college
  - 2. The kind of work you will pursue
  - 3. Whom to marry
  - 4. Whom to serve (Spiritual direction)
- A. You have great opportunities:
  - 1. 58% of our people make a living on jobs that did not exist 50 years ago.
  - 2. Our knowledge of natural science is doubling every 10 to 12 years.
  - 3. One farmer produces as much as 50 did at the turn of the cen-

ture.

4. 90% of our prescription drugs were unknown 10 years ago.

A. Where do you fit into this picture and how? Who or what will you use as a yardstick in making your decisions?

May I suggest my Friend—Jesus. Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature and in favor with God and man.”

A. He advanced in wisdom (Mental Growth).

Great power dwells in the mind of an individual.

Education and learning begin in the cradle and do not cease until we die.

Opportunities for education and learning are currently unequaled.

Great potential exists in the minds of this class of 1971.

Paul told Timothy to “give attendance to reading,” 1 Timothy 4:13.

A. Jesus Advanced in Stature (Physical Growth).

Medical science has made great strides.

The life span of man is continually increasing.

A keen mind in a strong body is the goal.

Physical development is very important to success.

Few with ruined bodies and health go very far in life.

Our body belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Don’t dissipate your body through misuse of drugs, alcohol and such.

A. Jesus Grew In Favor With God (Spiritual Growth).

We cannot overlook the spiritual.

The soul of education is the education of the soul.

As God's Son came to do His will.

The most important things in life will be: Honesty, Integrity, Sincerity, Humility, Morality.

You may look with anticipation toward the not too far distant future. But where will you be 100 or 1000 years from tonight?

How do you currently stand in the presence of God?

A. Jesus Grew In Favor With Man (Social Growth).

Ours is a great heritage, but it cost much sweat, blood, and tears.

We can't live alone, "No man is an island unto himself." We are a part of society.

We are our brother's keeper.

We should try and make the world a better place to live.

Conclusion: Matthew 6:19-20, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourself treasures in heaven..."



## COME BEFORE WINTER

In 2 Timothy 4:21 we read, “Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.” This terse plea came from Paul, the apostle. It was probably the last thing he ever wrote. It closed his parchment to Timothy, whom he longed to see before his death. Earlier he had requested his coat, the one left at Troas. He also wanted his books, but most of all he wanted to hear the voice of his beloved Timothy, his young son in the faith. Paul’s writing board was a stone bench at the base of the Mamertine dungeon in Rome. It was in this hole that Rome threw its victims before crushing their lives from their bodies. Paul awaited execution by way of beheading, a rather painless way to die, since he was a Roman citizen. Other prisoners, not citizens, were burned alive, fed to the lions, or used as targets for the gladiators. Paul knew that before long, guards would come for him and lift him from the pit, taking him to the north of Rome along the Ostian Road. There, near a place called the Tres Fontain, Paul would lay his head on a block of wood. A sword would flash in the sun, and the great apostle would step into the glory-world he knew awaited him. The conditions of Paul’s imprisonment during the time he wrote this letter were vastly different from those of his previous incarceration. He no longer lived in his own hired house. It was dangerous to even visit him during this time. Winter was coming, and in this land of Caesar the chill would

be replaced by bitter, numbing cold. During those nights, prisoners would die in this horrible place. Guards would find their frozen bodies at dawn and toss them on refuse piles as just so much garbage. This was, no doubt, the reason he wanted his coat.

You can feel the urgency in his words. “Timothy, whatever you do, do it quickly. Don’t wait until it is too late. Come before winter.” Paul knew that with the coming winter, the navigation routes of the Mediterranean would be dangerous, if not impassable. These words are lifted from the pages of Paul’s sacred will, yet they are as current as tomorrow’s headlines, and as meaningful as any message the apostle ever wrote.

Some of you know that there is something you should be doing, but you put it off, hoping for another day...another time. When and if you ever attend to the matter, it may well be too late. Winter’s winds may have already blown, the river turned to ice, the thoroughfare blocked by drifts too high to negotiate. Today I want to talk with you about how to get ready for winter. I would like to begin by pointing out that **THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE IN GETTING READY FOR WINTER.**

## **I. WE NEED TO PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

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It’s time to prioritize. Get things in proper order according to their importance.

(In Missouri, where I live, winter demands that we get ready for the cold dreary days ahead by checking the fuel supply, farmers get their stock ready, they have their house in order, snow tires on their truck, etc.).

In serving Christ, there are some things that should command our attention:

1. Seeking first the kingdom---Mt. 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." The kingdom should be first in our lives. That means before everything else. Far too many put the church last. They take care of every need, except the most important one, the salvation of their soul.

2. First casting out the beam out of our own eye, Mt. 7:1, "Judge not that ye be not judged, first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Far too often we criticize others when we have faults of our own that need to be addressed. One cannot be ready to meet the Lord who spends all his time criticizing others while paying no attention to his own faults and failures.

3. First giving ourselves to the Lord like the Macedonians. 2 Cor. 8:5, "And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord..." There is a great need for all of us to put the Lord first in our life. How many put their own wants, desires, and feelings before considering God and our duty to Him?

## **II. SETTLE THAT DISPUTE IN YOUR FAMILY, BEFORE WINTER.**

Words have been spoken that, as water spilled on the ground, cannot be brought back.

Wounds remain open and festered. Silence prevails where once laughter and love were evident. You haven't seen someone in years. You haven't even talked to them. It may be your Mother who brought you into this world, or your Father who provided and cared for you. Perhaps your children that you brought into this world, but you have allowed them to slip away. Winter is coming. Look at the signs all around you: the changing colors, the grey skies, the preparation of others. As surely as the sunset, you will one day stand before an open casket. You will look upon the one so long estranged. Hot tears will

scald your cheeks, you will reach out too late to take the folded hand. In desperation you will ask for forgiveness, but the ears can no longer hear. Winter has already come. Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt. While there, a mighty famine took place and his brothers were forced to come to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph recognizes them but does not reveal himself, but claims they are spies. They, in fear, tell him that they are twelve brothers, one is no longer and the youngest is with their aged father. He could have washed his hands of them as they had him, but he did not. He casts them into prison, but finally agrees to let them go, if they will leave one and return with their younger brother. “Then they said to one another, we are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.” And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, Do not sin against the boy; and you would not listen? Therefore, behold, his blood is now required of us,” Gen. 42:21-22.

Maybe someone pleaded with you and you did not listen. They begged you not to go, but you were mad and left anyway. Maybe you were just stubborn. Whatever the reason, you need to fix it, before winter. Later, Joseph’s brothers return with Benjamin and are received by Joseph. After a series of events, they are told that Benjamin cannot return home with them but must remain behind. Judah pleads in behalf of his younger brother and aged father. At that point, Joseph could restrain himself no longer and made himself known to his brothers. “Then, he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him,” Gen.45:14-15. What a wonderful end to the story that began in such a tragic fashion. Why don’t you resolve today to restore friendship or association with a loved one, someone from you have been estranged far too long? Do it before winter; don’t wait until it is too late.

### **III. WE SHOULD ALSO SETTLE DISPUTES IN THE FAMILY OF GOD, BEFORE WINTER.**

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Too many churches are divided and too many brethren are alienated. They don't speak, they don't work together, they don't pray together. It's time to bury the disputes and hard feelings of the past. Fences need to be mended, harsh feelings forgotten and ruined lives straightened out. Brethren souls are being lost in some places because we have allowed division and hard feelings to separate us from our brethren. It's time to get the family together. Winter is coming.

Love your brother, 1 Peter 2:17, "Love the brotherhood."

Forgive your brother, Mt. 18:35 "...forgive every brother his trespass."

Restore your brother, Gal. 6:1, "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault restore such a one..."

Be reconciled to your brother, Mt. 5:23-24; Mt. 18:15-17, "Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone..."

It is shameful in some places when brethren won't even attend a gospel meeting because they have something against some people at another congregation. Such differences and hard feelings need to be settled.

### **IV. STRAIGHTEN UP THE PAST, BEFORE WINTER.**

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He was a great preacher, so goes the story, an outstanding evangelist. But he had a secret. Not earth shaking, but one that kept him awake many nights. Before, obeying the Lord, he had worked in a mid-west factory. He was addicted to booze. One day, needing some money to buy liquor, he stole a typewriter, pawned it and used the money to satisfy his habit. Shortly thereafter, he was converted, but

never repaid the money. Then he started studying with a desire to preach. And later began preaching. He still never made restitution. He became popular and successful as a preacher. "I can't go back and confess," he thought. His conscience still bothered him, until finally he decided he must go back. He went to the old factory. Everyone was glad to see him, even his boss. He was received royally. Hard as it was, he said to his boss, "I've come here to make amends." Then he told the story of what he had done. "I come to ask forgiveness and pay for the typewriter plus interest." As he spoke, his boss began to weep and said, "You know I never believed much in the Christ you preach, but if He would give you a heart like that, I would like to believe in Him also." This man made the tough journey---before winter. Today, if there is something in your life that you have not made right with God, now is the time. If you need to apologize to someone for harsh, cutting, or bitter words, why not now? If you need to repay a debt, start today. Even though the creditor may have marked it off as a bad debt, the Lord has not. If you need to rectify a lie, do it. Straighten out your life, before winter. Mt. 3:2 "...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Verse 8, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. Acts 19:18-19, "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver."

## **V. OBEY THE GOSPEL, BEFORE WINTER**

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The gospel calls you today. 2 Thess. 2:14, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel."

It is God's power to save. Rom. 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation..."

The call continues. Mt. 11:28, "Come unto me all you that labor and

are heavy laden...”

The call of the Gospel is an urgent one. Just like the one made by Paul to Timothy. Time is of the essence.

Acts 2:38, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” The same day there “added unto them about 3000 souls.”

Acts 8:38, “He commanded the chariot to stand still and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized him.”

Acts 22:16, “Why tarry? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling upon the name of the Lord.” Sinner friend, have you obeyed the gospel? Are you still in your sin? Don’t wait too long. Winter is coming. If you fail to come, you will be lost, and that is a price too great to pay.

Your life is like the seasons. You begin as a child, the spring of life, everything comes to life during this period. Then the summer season, you are an adult, you marry, have a family and choose a vocation. This is such a busy time. We often are so involved that we forget the real needs of our life until it is too late. Next comes autumn, our hair begins to speck with white and the days grow shorter and faster. Finally there is winter, disease strikes the body, followed by weakness and eventual death. The problem? NOT EVERYONE HAS FOUR SEASONS. Tragically, millions have said, “Just before I get to winter, I will make the change. I’ll know when that time is.” But winter comes early, unexpectedly. They wait too long. For you, winter has not yet come. There is still life in your body, strength in your limbs, and light in your eyes. You know that things desperately need to be done, victories that can be won, Gordian knots to be untied. Come before winter, come before the haze of Indian summer has faded from the fields, come before the November wind strips the leaves from the trees and sends them whirling to the ground, come before

snow covers the countryside and the streams turn to ice. Come before your heart is cold and desire has failed. Come before life is over and you are called to meet God. Come today.



## THE A.D. 70 DOCTRINE

Often spoken of as Realized Eschatology or Fulfilled Eschatology (doctrine of completed last things), the meaning being that these things have already come to pass. Also spoken of as “The Preterist View,” and/or the A.D. 70 Doctrine.

The following are among the major tenets of this doctrine:

1. All Bible prophecy was fulfilled completely by A.D. 70.
2. The Kingdom came with power in A.D. 70.
3. The second coming of Christ occurred in A.D. 70.
4. The Judgment Day took place in A.D. 70.
5. The resurrection of the dead came in A.D. 70.
6. The Law of Moses ended in A.D. 70.
7. The world ended in A.D. 70.

I cannot, in the time allotted to me, cover all the various tenets of this doctrine, or notice the many detailed quotations from the principal writers who teach this theory.

Hence, I will restrict my remarks to only a few of the major ones.

Let me say in the beginning that if any portion of scripture used by the Preterists to support their position collides with and/or contradicts other specific and clearly-spoken portions of scripture, they err and the foundation of their major premise crumbles.

I will try to deal with the taproot issues of this belief system and bypass unnecessary clutter.

In his book, "*The Spirit of Prophecy*," Max King makes the following statements:

"There is no scriptural basis for extending the second coming of Christ beyond the fall of Judaism," p. 105.

"...the end of the Jewish world was the second coming of Christ," p. 81.

"Prophecy found its complete fulfillment in the second coming of Christ, and now may be regarded as closed and consummated," p. 65.

## **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 1**

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It is the contention of the advocates of this doctrine that all the books of the New Testament were written prior to A.D. 70.

Almon W. Williams says, "The belief in pre-A.D. 70 dates for the NT books is absolutely necessary for the truthfulness of this doctrine..."

The writers of the NT books do not in their books indicate the precise date when they were composed. We must rely upon internal evidences and/or the external data available in order to arrive at an approximate time when the book was written.

Few, if any, would deny that many of the books of the NT were written prior to A.D. 70.

In fact, three fourths of all New Testament books fall in that category including Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philipians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, all written by Paul who died around A.D. 67 or 68. Peter reportedly died around 68 A.D., hence, his two books would have also been written before 70 A.D., so also Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, James and Hebrews. Jude is thought to have been written between 68-80 A.D., with most commentators placing it near the latter date. First, second, and third John between 90 and 98 A.D., and Revelation 90-96 A.D.

The point that must be kept in mind is that if a single book was written after 70 A.D. that mentions a future event to be fulfilled, then the adherents of the A.D. theory under consideration would be dealt a death blow. The weight of evidence giving the book of John a date after A.D. 70 is both considerable and weighty. Alford 70-85, Hendriksen 80, B.W. Johnson 75-90, Godet 80-90, MacDonald 85 or 86, Matthew Henry 80-96. If the testimony of Ireneus and Jerome is trustworthy, the date must lie between 80-98. Kistemaker dates the three epistles of John from 90-95. Remember John in chapter 14 affirms that Jesus is going away to prepare a place and come again. 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

This one passage, if written after A.D. 70, renders the whole theory false, and the scholarship of the world indicates this book was written after that date. The theory is therefore built on doubt and uncertainty in this particular matter.

## **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 2**

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It is unthinkable that had Christ returned in A.D. 70 without recognition or mention by someone.

The immensity of the event would have certainly prompted someone to write about it, yet is not recorded anywhere.

None of the church fathers wrote about it.

Josephus, who covered the Jewish/Roman war, wrote nothing about the personal return of Christ.

Why was it not covered, publicized, proclaimed, and celebrated?

Surely God would have thought it important enough to notify His whole creation of a matter that was prophesied and written about, but, no, nothing but silence.

In A.D. 70, Jesus did come in judgment upon the rebellious Jews as prophesied in Mt. 24 and Luke 21. No honest Bible student would deny this.

Which newsflash would have been more meaningful in A.D. 70, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish State, or the second personal advent of the Lord?

We know the answer. The destruction of the Jewish State was published and proclaimed by many writers, but nothing--zero about the second coming of Christ.

This is a burr under the saddle of the Preterist.

### **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 3**

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In 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Paul addressed the “coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him.”

These people were told to “not become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report, or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord was already come.”

Paul reminded that “that day” will not come until the rebellion (apostasy) occurs and the “man of lawlessness is revealed.”

This man will “oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

This system was already at work in Paul’s time, but was being held back and prevented from developing.

There was no apostate system within the Christian movement prior to A.D. 70.

There were local pockets of apostasy but no general apostasy or “falling away” until 200-300 years later.

The advocates of the A.D. 70 theory claim that the apostasy Paul prophesied of involved the Jewish people under the leadership of the wicked John Levi. True, during the upheaval associated with the Jewish calamity, many Jewish criminals, including the wicked Levi, cause havoc among the Jewish nation, particularly at Jerusalem.

Matters all over were in an uproar and God’s judgment was about to be poured out upon the Jewish people. But to **ascribe this, or any part of it, to the apostasy Paul foretold, would be missing Paul’s main thrusts. The falling away was to be within the Christian community.**

Acts 20:28, “I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves men will arise speaking twisted things, to draw away disciples after them...”

Paul repeated the warning to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:1-3.

Some Preterists affirm that Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2 are

related, that they compliment each other. The claim, however, won't float.

Matthew 24 foretells the destruction of the Jewish State, while Paul in 2 Thessalonians warns believers about a general apostasy. The two are incompatible.

**A real problem:** If Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 actually alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish State, instead of to a future general apostasy, why would anyone assume that the "day of the Lord" had already come when in fact it had not?

The destruction of Jerusalem was pending, so no one thought it had already happened.

Consequently, the "day of the Lord" in Thessalonians was a reference to the second personal advent of Christ and not to His coming in judgment upon the disobedient Jewish nation.

Paul did not address Jerusalem's destruction in Thessalonians, but rather an apostasy that was in the making at the time he penned his words, an apostasy that did not begin to formally develop until after A.D. 70. That system will be "overthrown with the breath of His mouth and destroyed by the splendor of his coming."

#### **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 4**

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The following passages strike at the very taproot of the A.D. 70 scenario.

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly (physical) body to be like His glorious body," Philippians 3:20-21.

"Beloved, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be

like Him,” 1 John 3:2.

The glorified body, such as the one our Lord has, is not subject to aging, diseases, or death. The above passages inform us that we also will have glorified bodies. The change in our bodies will happen when Jesus appears again.

Not all Preterists explain Philippians 3:20-21 in the same way. Jim Hopkins contends that Paul is speaking of a collective body of believers, i.e. the church, by the usage of “lowly body.”

Brian Kimball says of “glorified bodies,” “When Jesus came back in A.D. 70, He did take all of the Christians with Him (into heaven) and they did receive their glorified bodies at that rapture.”

This view is, of course, Hyper-Eschatology, for it has no basis in scripture.

Nothing on record of missing persons, perhaps hundreds or thousands of them suddenly disappearing being raptured.

Surely Josephus would have chronicled such an event as this. There would surely be some record of it.

Don Preston says Philippians 3:1 refers to the resurrection, which, according to him, is history. Anyone can see the futility of his contention since nothing in the passage speaks of a resurrection.

The “lowly body” is employed by Paul in the same vein as our Lord’s “glorified body.”

So if one “body” refers to a collective group of people, so does the other “body.”

There is nothing in either term that denotes a collective body of people.

If then Jesus returned personally for the second time in A.D. 70, where are our glorified bodies? Why are we aging, getting sick, falling apart and dying?

Glorified bodies do not experience any of these physical negatives.

Both Paul and John say we will be recipients of those bodies when the Lord appears again. Yet we don't have them. Why? Because Jesus has not personally appeared the second time.

If Jesus did make his second personal appearance in A.D. 70, Paul did not tell the truth in Philippians 3:21, for we have not yet received our glorified bodies.

#### **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 5**

The Preterist's argument goes like this: The "last days" came to an end when God's wrath was poured out upon the rebellious Jewish nation in A.D. 70, at which time the Kingdom of God was ushered in and a new age began. The old Law of Moses, or the Age of Judaism, did not end at the cross, and that Hebrews 8:13 shows that it had not ended, but was in the process of ending. "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

They claim that the phrase "is ready to vanish away" demonstrates that it was still in effect at the time the Hebrew letter was penned.

Here, the Preterist must reconcile this statement with Paul in Eph. 2:14-15, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made us (Jews and Gentiles) both one and has broken down in His flesh (on the cross) the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances (Old Covenant), that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace."



It is true that the old covenant had not become obsolete in the eyes of the unbelieving Jew, but in the eyes of the Jewish Christians these matters had already ended, for Jesus had made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Preterists also manipulate Joel's prophecy to mean that the last days were completed at the second coming of Christ in A.D. 70. And since the last days ended then, the new age began at that time, an age, according to their doctrinal platform, where Jesus will no longer return, where death is no more, where resurrection is history, and where judgment has been executed.

One flaw in this reasoning strikes at the very taproot of their doctrine.

If the old covenant did not end until A.D. 70, all believers leading up to A.D. 70 lived under two mediators, Moses and Jesus.

Paul must have been unaware of the Old Law's status because he wrote Timothy and said, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Timothy 2:5.

There is no getting around this dilemma. Either the Preterist is wrong or the apostle is wrong. Either there were two mediators or there was one as Paul affirmed.

The diversity of views on this subject among Preterists are overwhelming. Some of them teach that the Kingdom reign of Christ existed until A.D. 70, at which time His Kingdom reign was handed back to the Father and the Kingdom reign of God was ushered in and a New Age began.

Biblical teaching, however, had the Kingdom reign of God existing long before A.D. 70.

Acts 8:12: Certain converts of Philip were immersed after Philip told them the "good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ."

Paul synthesized the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of God when he wrote, “No immoral, impure or greedy person who is an idolater has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God,” Ephesians 5:5. The Kingdom belongs to both. And this was prior to A.D. 70.

Again, let me remind you that if some major doctrinal feature of the A.D. 70 persuasion clashes with some clearly taught biblical truth, the Preterist’s major premise disintegrates.

### **MAJOR PROBLEM NUMBER 6**

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Problems regarding worship:

1. Should the Lord’s Supper be observed after A.D. 70?

1 Corinthians 11:26, we “show the Lord’s death till he comes again.”

If He came in 70 A.D., why still have the supper?

They have two options: (1) the Lord’s supper no longer proclaims the Lord’s death. But that is the very purpose of it. Or (2) the Lord’s supper no longer applies to Christians, so exclude it.

2. Another problem is singing. If the doctrine is true, every song that mentions the Lord’s return or anything pertaining there to would have to be excluded.

## CAN A CHILD OF GOD FALL FROM GRACE?

The churches of Galatia owed their existence to the preaching of the apostle Paul. Sometime after their establishment, Paul learns about the trouble caused by the Jewish/Christian agitators. According to chapter 5, they were teaching that Christians were still under obligation to keep the law of Moses. However, in this chapter Paul affirms that Christ frees us from the law, and were we to seek to enter it again, we would be entangled with what he called the “yoke of bondage.” He further points out that when one seeks justification from the law of Moses, he “is fallen from grace,” v4. The word “fallen” or “severed” means “to be loosed or separated from Christ.” It is aorist tense in the Greek and “marks the moment of decision to accept the teaching of the Judaizers; when they did that, then and there they were separated from Christ as a branch is separated from a tree; henceforth, Christ would profit them nothing.” This rebuke is addressed to all who attempt to be justified by the law.

This is not the only passage that cautions the child of God about falling from grace. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, we are told to “receive not the grace of God in vain.” Hebrews 10:29 warns us not to “do despite to the spirit of Grace.” We are not to “fall short of God’s grace,” Hebrews 12:15, and in Jude verse 4 we are told of some who “turn the

grace of God into lasciviousness.” On the other hand, we are admonished to “continue in grace,” Acts 13:43; “stand in grace Romans,” 5:2; “be strengthened in grace,” 2 Timothy 2:1; and “grow in grace,” 2 Peter 3:18.

While many have been led to believe that it is impossible for a child of God to fall from grace, the Bible evidence that one can fall from grace is abundant. The idea of “once in grace, always in grace” came about as a result of the teaching of John Calvin, a Swiss reformer. Today, it reaches into many denominations and is part of their belief structure. It is, however, a very dangerous doctrine. Both old and new testaments speak of both potential and actual apostasy.

Hosea said of the Northern kingdom: “And my people are bent on backsliding from me; though they call them to Him that is on high, none at all will exalt Him,” (Hosea 11:9).

Moses warned Israel in Deuteronomy 8:11, “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,”

Ezekiel said, “When the righteous man turneth away from this righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein, in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.”

The new testament also declares that it is possible to fall away from the faith. Jesus in Luke 8:13 taught that some “in time of trouble would fall.” Also in John 15:1-6, Jesus taught that some branches would be pruned and burned. “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” Here we have a clear and vivid picture of what it means to fall from grace. Paul declared that some would “turn aside from the faith,” (1 Timothy 1:5-6); that some would “make shipwreck of the faith,” (1 Timothy 1:19); some will “depart from the faith,” (1 Timothy 4:1); some will “deny the faith,”

(1 Timothy 5:8); others will “cast off the faith,” (1 Timothy 5:12); others “err concerning the faith,” (1 Timothy 6:21); and that some will have “their faith overthrown,” (2 Timothy 2:18).

All of these passages in both old and new testaments testify to the possibility of falling from grace. But the Bible also gives us a number of examples of people who actually did fall from grace. King Saul, the first king of Israel, is an example. In 1 Samuel 10, we learn from verse 1 that he was anointed of God. Verse 10 declares that he was endowed with the Lord’s spirit, and verse 24 tells us that he was chosen of God. Verse six, however, tells us that he turned into another man and that God gave him another heart, that is God allowed him to peruse his own inclinations. As a result, God eventually withdrew (1 Samuel 28:16) and Saul ended his life in suicide (1 Samuel 31:4-6).

Judas is another example of a man who fell from grace. He was the Lord’s chosen apostle, according to Matthew 10:1. However, he betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Acts 1:25 declares that he “fell by transgression.” And Jesus tells us that he was lost (John 17:12). Judas certainly fell from grace. Those who claim that he only fell from being an apostle overlook the fact that Jesus declared that he was lost. In 2 Timothy 2:16-18, we read about Hymenaeus and Philetus, who erred from the faith and even overthrew the faith of others. Also, in Hebrews 6:4-6, we read of several who reverted to Judaism and “fell away.” To contend that it is impossible for anyone to fall from grace is to overlook the plain teaching of the scriptures.

The Bible does, however, teach that it is possible to prevent falling. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” This verse not only teaches the possibility of falling, it also points out a way to keep from falling. “Take heed,” said the apostle. In other words, “watch,” “be careful,” so that you won’t fall. But God gives us a remedy to prevent falling in 2 Peter 1:5-11. We are told in these verses to add to our faith, virtue, knowl-

edge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, etc. Then Peter tells us that, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Friend, why would Peter say we would "never fall" if it were impossible in the first place? Obviously we can fall, but we should seek to prevent it.

What happens if we do fall? Can we be restored? I believe the Bible teaches we can. In Acts 8:20-21, we have the account of Simon trying to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit with money. He is rebuked for doing so and then told to "repent of this thy wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." People who backslide, those who fall from grace, need to repent and pray for forgiveness.

In James 5:19-20, we read, "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." Why do saints fall away? What are the causes? We have all had the heart break of seeing our friends and loved ones fall away from the grace of God. Are there reasons for such actions that we can identify? I believe there are and following are some of them:

1. Some fall because of persecution. In Matthew 13:21, the Lord said some seed fell on rocky soil. It soon sprang up, but because it had no root, it withered when hit by the hot sun. There was no depth. Some who obey Christ are like that. They endure for a while but when persecution and tribulation come along, they soon give up under the pressure and fall away. Many may have failed to count the cost. They viewed Christianity as a joy ride with no difficulty or hardship. Hence, they were not ready when it came.

2. Some fall because of natural disasters. We live in a world cursed by evil. Sin and its consequences are everywhere. We also encounter earthquakes, storms, floods, cancer, heart disease, tragedy, etc. Death

invades our homes, illness racks our bodies, sorrows beset us. Some feel that if God really loved them, all these things would not happen, hence, they give up and quit following him. This reveals an unrealistic and unbalanced view of life. The lessons we learn from Job teach us that God does not necessarily shield us from the troubles of life. Even Paul suffered much as he sought to preach the gospel 2 Corinthians 11:25-27. To turn away from God during such trials is foolish indeed.

3. Some fall out of neglect. "...how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation..." (Hebrews 2:3). Note carefully that the writer did not say that being lost will necessarily be the result of some overt, horrible act. Just neglecting our duty will be enough. Many fall, not because they intend to be bad or evil, but because they start neglecting Bible study, prayer, associating with other Christians, etc. It is a shame, but true that many who would never neglect their health, do neglect their soul.

4. Some fall because they are seduced by false teachers. "In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits..." 1 Timothy 4:1. We are instructed in 1 John 4:1 to "try the spirits..." We have an obligation to investigate those who claim to teach the truth. Believing a lie or error will result in the loss of our soul. We must compare what they teach with the Bible (Acts 17:11). Everyone who claims to be from God is not. Many are deceived and fall because they have believed something that was false.

Falling from grace is possible, it is very serious, and will be fatal unless the one who falls repents.

# THE ASSEMBLY

*James 2:2*

(Sermon Outline)

## I. The Assembly

1. Named, James 2:2, “For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring...”

2. Assembled by the church, 1 Cor. 11:18, “For first of all when ye come together in the church I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.”

3. Called to order, Acts 14:27, “Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

4. Common meals are forbidden, 1 Cor. 11:34, “And if any hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation.”

5. Not to forsake, Heb. 10:25, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together...” “together,” i.e. “a gathering together in one place.”



6. Prayer, Acts 4:31, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

7. Praise, 1 Cor. 14:26, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

8. Lord’s Supper, Acts 20:7, “Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together...”

9. Giving, 1 Cor. 16:1-2, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing it up as he may prosper that there be no collections when I come.”

## II. Purpose Of The Assembly

1. For edification, Heb.10:24-25, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.”

“exhorting one another...,” i.e. they assembled for the purpose of being exhorted.

They also exhorted daily in order to encourage one another to good works, Heb. 3:13, “but exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Edification included “building up” and “instruction.” 1 Cor. 14:19, 26, “Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my

understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

Verse 26, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

## 2. To Teach All People.

Acts 11:26, “And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year, they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

The word of God was taught in these assemblies of the church during the year that Paul and Barnabas worked there.

## 3. To Discuss Church Problems.

Acts 15:30-31, “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.”

(A meeting other than on Sunday service)

## 4. To Discuss Efforts in Foreign Evangelism.

Acts 14:26-27, “From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

(A meeting of the church, other than Sunday Morning, to discuss evangelist efforts.)

5. To Determine How to Best Do Benevolent Work.

Acts 6:1-6, They “summoned the multitude of the disciples and said...”

6. For Discipline.

1 Cor. 5:4, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

7. For Worship.

Acts 20:7, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...”

III. Arrangements and Order

1. The tongue speakers spoke by course.

1 Cor. 14:27, “If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.”

Some think it means “two or three persons.”

Others that it means “two or three sentences.”

2. The Prophets Spoke One by One.

1 Cor. 14:31, “For you can all prophecy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”

(Could not speak at the same time, since that would lead to

confusion.)

### 3. All Silent While the Teachers Spoke.

Acts 15:12, “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.”

### 4. Confusion Condemned.

1 Cor. 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

### 5. Women Not to Teach, but be Silent.

1 Cor. 14:34-35, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive as the law also says, and if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.”

1 Timothy 2:11-12, “I permit not a woman to teach nor have dominion over a man.”

### 6. The Same Rule Applies In All Assemblies.

1 Cor. 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

### 7. All Was To Be Done Decently and Orderly.

1 Cor. 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Warning: If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

1 Cor. 14:37-38, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let

him be ignorant,” i.e. “if anyone disregards it, he is disregarded by God.”

#### IV. Violations

1. Sunday School or Bible Classes. Classification For the Purpose of Teaching.

Note how the epistles were delivered to the churches:

Col. 4:16, “And when the epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodicians and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”

1 Thess. 5:17, “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.”

What arrangement was used?

Acts 15:30, “So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle.”

Men delivered the epistle to the assembled church.

The church was not classified for such teaching.

Note: Col. 3:18-4:1, These instructions were to be delivered to the assembled church.

2. Children’s Church

3. Multiple Assemblies

#### VII. What Constitutes An Assembly of the Church?

The disciples came together to worship Acts 20:7, an assembly of the church for that purpose.

The disciples commanded to “forsake not” this assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

The whole church came together for worship and edification in 1 Cor. 14:23.

“Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place,” that was an assembly

1 Cor. 11:18, “For first of all when you come together as a church,” an assembly of the church.

Acts 15:31

Acts 14:26-27

Acts 11:26

From these and related passages, we learn that an assembly of the church exists when the church is called together to perform those acts and functions given her by God in the New Testament Scriptures.

The same people may come together on other occasions to do various things such as eat, participate in recreation, etc., but such is not an assembly of the church.

The church cannot scripturally assemble to do a work God has not given the church to do.

If so, where is the authority for such a practice?

For example, the church may not assemble by Divine authority to endorse a political candidate. That is not a work of the church.

She may not assemble to eat a common meal. Such is forbidden in 1 Cor. 11.

The place or building does not constitute the church, nor do people

gathering in the building necessarily constitute an assembly of the church.

We must be careful to properly distinguish between what the church may do by Divine authority and what she may not do.

## CARNAL WARFARE

When I turned eighteen, the Korean Conflict was in raging. The brethren among whom I labored had historically been united in their opposition to Christians participating in carnal warfare. At that time, draft boards were not very friendly to conscientious objectors. Some would outright deny such a classification. Others, after a lengthy battle, would finally issue the 4D (conscientious objector) classification. A few young men had to serve time in prison because the local board refused to honor and give such a classification. As I contemplated how to register, Brother King and Gay both advised that I would be best served to request a 1-0 classification which was reserved for preachers. By that time, I was preaching rather widely and had no problem proving that I was actively engaged in that vocation. Fortunately, I had no trouble at all, and the local board granted my request for a 1-0 or preacher classification. Following are copies of the Local Boards letter to Brother Gay advising him that I had been classified as we requested. Also, a copy of his letter of thanks for their consideration and a letter to me that he wrote from Pontiac, Michigan.



A Glimpse of Glory

TO WHOME IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have known Evangelist Ronny Wade, 4000 Greshaw, Fort Worth, Texas for several years.

In the summer of 1951, Ronny started out in the evangelistic work -- travelling with me during my work, preaching quite a bit, doing the baptizing, leading singig, and doing other leading work. He studied the Bible under me, and worked hard to prepare himself for the evangelistic work. During the School months, he sent to school and preached almost every week-end.

The summer of 1952 he travelled with me again, studying, preaching, and otherwise helping with the work. He also held some meetings by himself-- with good results, and goes back to the same places for more protracted meetings.

In 1953 and so far this year, he is busy preaching only while in school. He is an ordained minister of the gospel, of the Church of Christ, so recognized by the Churches of Christ over the United States as reports of him in the Old Paths Advocate will verify.

I feel that Ronny Wade should be given a 4-D classification. But in the event his Board does not see fit to give him this 4<sup>th</sup>D classification, I then feel sure that he should be given a 1-0.

Signed: *Homer A. Gay*

Homer A. Gay, Minister Church of Christ, Editor Old Paths Advocate, Lebanon, Missouri.


July 3, 1954.

To whom it may concern: Letter from Homer A. Gay

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM  
**CLASSIFICATION ADVICE**

Approval of District Bureau not required.  
 Texas Local Board No. 112  
 Selective Service System

300 West Vickery, Room 2001  
 Fort Worth, Texas  
(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)



Homer A. Gay, Minister Church of Christ  
 Editor Old Paths Advocate,  
 Lebanon, Missouri

AUG 4 1954  
(Date of mailing of Notice of Classification to Registrant)

You are advised that--

WADE, Ronny Foy  
(Last name) (First name) (Middle name)

Selective Service Number 41 112 36 193 has been classified in Class I-0

until 19 19    
(Insert date when applicable)

by  Local Board.  
 Board of Appeal.  
 President.

*Homer A. Gay*  
(Signature of Minister of Local Board) 16-5738-3 674

SSS Form No. 111

Classification Advice Letter from Homer Gay to Ronny Wade

Ronny F. Wade

August 10, 1954.

Selective Service Board 112,  
Fort Worth, Texas.

Dear Sirs:

This is to thank you for the consideration shown to Ronny Foy Wade in giving him a 1-O classification, and for notifying me of the same.

Very respectfully yours,

Homer A. Gay

### Note to Selective Service From Homer Gay

Milford, Michigan,  
Aug. 10, 1954.

Dear Ronny:

In as much as your Draft Board was nice enough to give you a 1-O classification, and to send me a notice of it, I thought it would be well for me to thank them for it. Am sending you a copy.

I would not be surprised if this is not better than a 4-B, as things now stand. The 4-D's are being sifted pretty closely, and of course can be re-classified at any time. (A 4-D is only a deferment).

We are really "keeping cool" up here in Michigan. It has rained some little bit, and the wind is from the north today, and is really cool. We know how to enjoy it tho, after our shift in Alabama.

I put in the first ten days up here getting a place located for a tent meeting, and doing advertizing. We began the meeting Sunday night-- with all of the Pontiac church here, but only a few others. I don't know how we will make out-- but we will give it a very hard TRY.

We really have it nice here, tho. A couple are gone for the Summer, and the parents let us have their home while here, and it is a very nice place and nicely furnished. So, we are enjoying getting to live to ourselves-- when we don't have company. All of them-- the members, are very good to us and the people of this little town are friendly and nice-- if we can only get them to come out to preaching.

If you get headed up this way be sure and come to see us.

I wish I could begin work up in here the middle of May and work until the first of September every year.

I am to try to make a deal for the church house in Pontiac while up here, and maybe try to start the worship over near where Floyd Ross lives.

Say, if you do not go to School now, and do not get into the c.c. work for a while, would you like to go to Bernie, Missouri and work with that young church for the winter? I don't believe they have any certain one yet.

We are both very well. Talked to Luvilla last night-- they have surely had a time with whooping cough it seems.

Give our love to all the faithful.

Yours in Christ,

Homer A. Gay

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION

Below is a Certificate of Ordination signed by the brethren of the Vaughn Blvd. church in Fort Worth, Texas, in November of 1951. All the brethren from that church have since gone on to their eternal reward. I owe each of them a great debt of gratitude. It was at their feet that I first obtained much of the knowledge that I currently possess. The certificate is also signed by brethren Homer L. King and Homer A. Gay. Following the certificate is a letter from Brother King written on September 6, 1951.

**Certificate of Ordination**

This is to certify that Renny Wade, of Ft Worth, Texas, who is a member of the Vaughn St Church of Christ, in good standing, walking in the commandments and ordinances blamelessly, being loyal and faithful to the Lord and His word; is duly ordained (set aside, appointed) to perform all the duties and obligations pursuant to the work of a qualified evangelist of the gospel of Christ.

We, the undersigned, officials, leaders, and evangelists, do, therefore commend the above named brother to the faithful brotherhood of the Church of Christ, on this 13<sup>th</sup> day of November, 51

W. A. Copher W. A. COPHER  
Notary Public  
in and for Signed  
Tarrant County  
Texas ag 15

W. L. Eritt Dan keel  
Evangelist  
C. M. Standen  
Evangelist  
Homer L. King Evangelist  
Homer A. Gay Evangelist  
J. G. Hayes HC Professor

Lebanon, Missouri,  
Route 2,  
September 6, 1951.

My Dear Brother Ronny:

I was glad to get your card today, requesting the ordination certificates, and I am enclosing them by return mail. I rejoice to know that you are devoting your life to the noble work of saving souls and other work of the church. May God bless you in all your service and struggles for Him and His cause, I do pray.

I would suggest that you ask the leaders of the church there to make a public announcement to the assembly of the church that you are giving your life in the service of the Lord as a gospel preacher, and that you request that they offer a public prayer in this behalf, and that the three copies be signed by two or more of them, or anyone else you desire. Then that day becomes the day you are recognized as an ordained evangelist. I would further suggest that you have a copy of this recorded at your court house, so there can be now or hereafter <sup>no</sup> any doubt about your being a recognized gospel preacher. You may need to present a copy of this to your local board to substantiate your claim as a preacher.

I shall be glad to have your reports for the OPA, and it would be well for you to have your name run in the OPA under the statement on carnal war, if you oppose going to war in any form.

Always feel free to call on me for any help in any way.

Lovingly and brotherly,

*Howard L. King*

---

## INDIVIDUAL CUPS

---

The controversy over individual cups in the communion has existed since their introduction into Churches of Christ in 1915. Brother J. D. Phillips, who fought their use in the printed page as well as in public debates, was known rather widely until his passing in the late 1900's. Following is a letter I received from him in 1977. He enclosed another letter from F. L. Rowe of Cincinnati, Ohio, who was publisher of the Christian Leader. According to Brother Rowe, who came to Cincinnati in 1886, there was no sign of them of individual cups "until long years afterward."

## A Glimpse of Glory

P. O. Box 158  
Cowden, Ill. 62422  
May 12, 1977

Dear Brother Ronny:

Your second installment in review of Knowles is very excellent, as was your first. Since he made such a mess of the case in which so many took syphilis from drinking from the same communion-cup after one who had the disease had partaken of it I wonder how many other similar blunders he has made. As McGarvey said of the ones who used the "psallo" argument to justify instrumental music in worship, I think "the wish is father to the thought."

You are doing a good job!

Yours,  
*J. D. P.*  
J. D. Phillips

P. S. I inclose an old letter which may be a help to you in dealing with the cups issue. Bro. F. L. Rowe was a son of John F. Rowe, a graduate of Bethany College. He once showed me his graduation papers written by the hand of Alexander Campbell himself. Bro. F. L. Rowe tolerated the individual cups but never got fully reconciled to the use of them. As long as he published the Leader he would publish articles on ~~an~~ (against) the cups, if written in good spirit.

You may keep the Rowe letter.

I used to change trains in Cincinnati, two or three times a year, and would spend my time in the Leader office (which was about three blocks from the Union station), while waiting for my train.

CINCINNATI

## Christian Leader

F. L. ROWE, Publisher  
434 ELM ST., CINCINNATI, OHIO

September 20, 1946

J. D. Phillips,  
Box 117,  
Mundy, Texas.

Dear Brother Phillips:

I have your card and will surely send you one of my news sheets when it is ready. I am so crowded that I can't get it in shape.

Yes, I get letters every day from old friends expressing themselves over the present situation, but my eyes began to fail me, and at my age 80, I think I had better slow down.

Individual cups came in about thirty or forty years ago. I came to Cincinnati about 1886 and there was no sign of them until long years after. For years after I came to Cincinnati, we sold the old style, one cup communion set and I know we hesitated about selling the individual. If I can learn anything definite, I will let you know.

fraternally,

*F. L. Rowe*


FLR:AMR

Below is the copy of a circular distributed by the church in Huntington, W. Va., in 1951. The meeting to be conducted by Homer A. Gay was a mission meeting in an area called Camp Creek several miles out from Huntington. The brethren had erected a tent and each night the residents of the area came out to hear the preaching. I was traveling with Brother Gay at the time and I was advertised as a "young preacher from Texas, who was a great song leader." As I remember it, Brother Gay allowed me to preach one or two nights of the meeting, a somewhat common practice in those days.

**BIG TENT MEETING**  
**NEAR CAMP CREEK SCHOOL HOUSE**  
*EVANGELIST*  
**HOMER A. GAY**

He has preached in most of the states from Coast to Coast!  
*He is the editor of the "Old Paths Advocate," and has written several tracts*

His Plea  
is  
**BACK**  
to the  
**BIBLE!**



Evangelist Ronny Wade  
from Texas  
A young preacher and a  
Great Song Leader  
Will be with him



HEAR EVANGELIST GAY EACH NIGHT AT 7:45  
----- *BEGINS* -----

**Sunday Night, August 5th**  
NO EVENING COLLECTIONS!

**You are Welcome, Wanted & Invited!**

Poster Printing - 7471

**DEBATE**

**Does the Bible teach the use of only One Cup in the distribution of the Fruit of the Vine in the Lord's Supper?**

---

**The Brethren of the Chapel Grove Church of Christ encourage you to weigh the evidence presented from God's Word as this issue is discussed in the form of a Debate.**

**Between: Ronnie F. Wade of Springfield, MO. and J.R. Snell of Lawrenceburg, TN.**

Sponsored by: Chapel Grove Church of Christ, Old Military Rd., Three Oaks, TN. and Downtown Church of Christ, Lawrenceburg, TN.

To be held in the auditorium of the  
Downtown Church of Christ, 1140  
Military Avenue

**JANUARY 19, 20  
7:00 EACH NIGHT**

**PROPOSITIONS:**

"The Scriptures teach that, when the church comes together to observe the Lord's supper, one cup (drinking vessels) must be used in the distribution of the fruit of the vine."

**Wade Affirms; Snell Denies (Jan. 19)**

"The Scriptures teach that, when the church comes together to observe the Lord's Supper, individual cups (drinking vessel) may be used in the distribution of the fruit of vine."

**Snell Affirms; Wade Denies (Jan. 20)**

**Come, let us reason together in this effort to destroy the walls of division as we consider the Word of Life!**

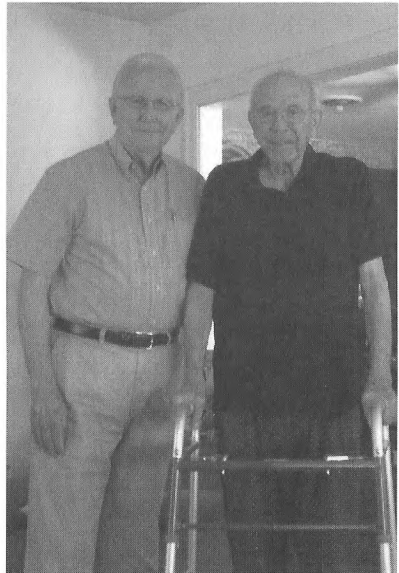
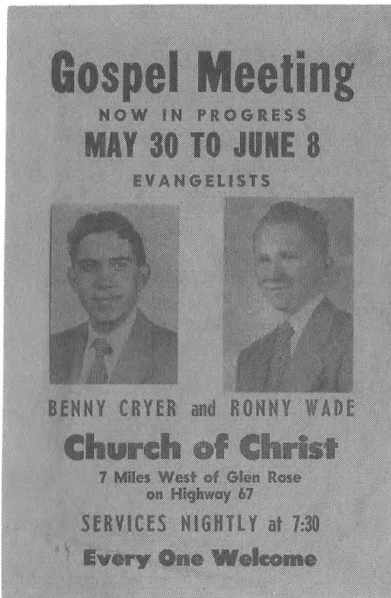
1990

### **Debate Announcement**

This announcement of the Snell-Wade debate appeared in the daily newspaper published in Lawrenceburg, Tenn. The debate was conducted in the building of the downtown Church of Christ. The building was historic. A number of storied men had filled the pulpit in bygone years including Guy N. Woods, Ira North, G. C. Brewer, B. C. Goodpasture and many others. Due to the split in churches of Christ over institutionalism, the main line churches had lost control of the building. Brother Snell was affiliated with those opposing orphans homes and certain cooperative works. Since the debate, the building has been demolished making way for newer structures.



The gospel meeting announced in the following circular took place in the Cross Roads community seven miles west of Glen Rose, Texas, in June of 1951. This was my first meeting. Brother Benny Cryer and I preached night about and visited throughout the community during the day. The meeting was conducted under a brush arbor with open sides which allowed the air to circulate giving some relief from the hot Texas June climate. Benny has been a dear from that day to the present.



Ronny Wade & Benny Cryer  
2015



Following is a letter from Brother Howard Sharp who at the time lived at Fair Oaks, Calif. Howard was an interesting individual. I always found him to be kind and considerate, and considered him a dear friend and respected brother. In this letter, he discusses how he obtained his first copy of the Living Oracles translation of the New Testament scriptures by Alexander Campbell. The two books to which he refers in the letter, he left to me

Fair Oaks, CA.

Jul. 3, 2001

Dear Ronny,

Here is one of your book choices, I think it is the better one. The Universalist Alexander Campbell was to debate with, would not sign any kind of a proposition for debate with A. Campbell on the proposition, Jehovah's punishment was eternal but remedial. He just wanted 'to talk' about anything, any time.

Here is a little incident that happened as I obtained my copy of The Living Oracles, this was in 1936:

I took a brother with me from Montebello, Howard Hand, he lives in the vicinity of Austin TX. now I think. We went A.E. Knoch's residence in Los Angeles one Saturday. He made the Concordant Translation of The New Testament, it used 'ing' endings in it, I don't remember if he gave a reason for so doing

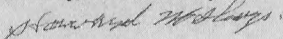
There were six or eight men seated around the room. We were just talking and a man across the room said to me, "You are a Campbellite, aren't you?" I responded. "Except for two things: 1- A. Campbell did not die for my sins. 2- I was not immersed into A. Campbell's name; beyond these, we have quite a lot in common.

He said, "I have a copy of A. Campbell's Living Oracles." I asked if he wanted to sell it and how much? He said a dollar. I started to get a dollar out of my wallet. He said, "No, hold on, I will send you the book and then you can send me the dollar." That is the way the deal was made. Not many deals are made that way now.

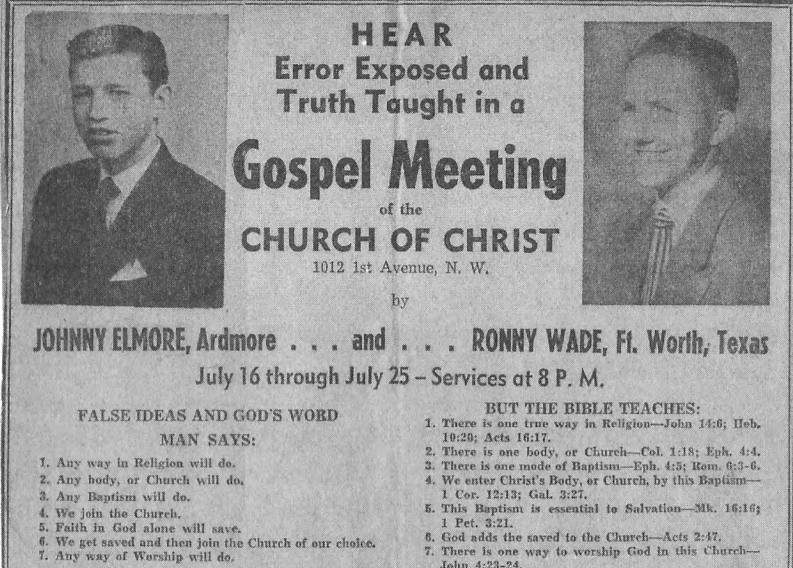
I gave all my books, except two, to Janice's son James he looks like a promising asset to the Lord's congregation.

May Jehovah's best continue with you and Alfreda.

Brotherly, Howard M. Sharp



The circular below announces a gospel meeting to be conducted in Ardmore, Oklahoma, July 16-25, 1954. Brother Joe Elmore, who was Johnny's father, had arranged for us to do the preaching. Brother Elmore was interested in giving young preachers a boost and encouraging them in their efforts. Johnny and I had been friends for some time and I was delighted for the opportunity to work with him. That has been some sixty-two years ago, and we are still friends and still work together when opportunity allows it.



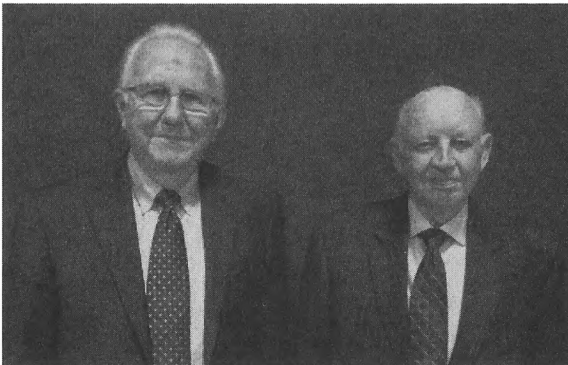
**HEAR**  
**Error Exposed and**  
**Truth Taught in a**  
**Gospel Meeting**  
of the  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
1012 1st Avenue, N. W.  
by  
**JOHNNY ELMORE, Ardmore . . . and . . . RONNY WADE, Ft. Worth, Texas**  
July 16 through July 25 - Services at 8 P. M.

**FALSE IDEAS AND GOD'S WORD**  
**MAN SAYS:**

1. Any way in Religion will do.
2. Any body, or Church will do.
3. Any Baptism will do.
4. We join the Church.
5. Faith in God alone will save.
6. We get saved and then join the Church of our choice.
7. Any way of Worship will do.

**BUT THE BIBLE TEACHES:**

1. There is one true way in Religion—John 14:6; Heb. 10:20; Acts 16:17.
2. There is one body, or Church—Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4.
3. There is one mode of Baptism—Eph. 4:5; Rom. 6:3-6.
4. We enter Christ's Body, or Church, by this Baptism—1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27.
5. This Baptism is essential to Salvation—Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
6. God adds the saved to the Church—Acts 2:47.
7. There is one way to worship God in this Church—John 4:23-24.



Johnny  
&  
Ronny  
62 years later

## SERMON OUTLINES

### PURE RELIGION

James 1:27

Introduction: "Free from mixture or contact with that which weakens, impairs, or pollutes.

I. Pure Object of Worship---God

Genesis 1:1 Mark 12:20

II. Pure Author and Sacrifice---Christ

Hebrews 2:1 Acts 2

III. Pure Creed---The Bible

James 1:21 Hebrews 4:12

IV. Pure Doctrine---The Gospel

Romans 1:16 2John9

V. Pure Ordinances---God Given

Teaching, Singing, Communion, Baptist, etc.

VI. Pure Institution---Church of Christ  
Matthew 16:18 Romans 16:16

Pure Head, Foundation, and Organization

VII. Pure Membership---Christians  
Acts 11:26 James 1:27  
Keep thy self pure

We should strive at all times to keep ourselves and the doctrine we preach pure and free from change and contamination.

**TAKE HEED UNTO**

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Thyself

1. Not Think Highly---Romans 12:3
2. Do Not Deceive---Gal. 6:3-7
3. Save---Acts 2:40
4. Deny---Mt. 16:24-26
5. Control---1Cor. 9:27
6. Keep Unspotted---James 1:27

The Doctrine

1. Keep Pure---Titus 2:7-8
2. Don't Add To---Rev. 22:18
3. Obey---Rom. 6:17-18
4. Not Teach False 1Tim. 4:1
5. Adorn---Titus 2:10
6. Abide In It---2John 9

AND

Continue In Them

Save Thyself

AND

Them That Hear Thee

## **THE DEVICES OF SATAN**

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2 Cor. 2:11

Satan is referred to in many ways in the Bible.

He is:

1. Arch enemy of God and man
2. Prince of the power of the air
3. Angel of light

### **I. Some of Satan's Devices**

1. Tempts man to do evil  
Gen. 3:1, Mt.4 :3, James 1:12-15
2. Deceives With Lies  
Gen. 3:1, Mt. 7:17, John 8:44, Acts 5:3
3. Adversary to God and Man  
Zech 3:, Job 1:9, Eph. 6:1, 1 Peter 5:8-9
4. Wrests and Corrupts God's Word  
Mt. 4:5-6, 2 Peter 3:16
5. Hinders Man's Salvation Whenever Possible  
Luke 8:11, Acts 13:4-13, 2 Cor. 4:4

### **II. The Christians Duty Toward Satan**

1. Resist  
James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9
2. Watch and avoid his snares and traps  
2 Timothy 3:7, 2 Timothy 2:26
3. If overtaken, flee to Christ and repent.

**Conclusion:**

1. Christ came to destroy Satan and his works Hebrews 2:14.  
1 John 3:8
2. God is the author of all good and Satan is the author of all evil.  
Romans 6:23.
3. Lest the fate of Satan and his followers befall you.  
Mt. 25:46, Rev. 20:10.

## EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE

Psa. 127

### I. Some who built in vain

Tower of Babel--- Gen. 11:1-8

Elijah and the prophets of Baal---1 Kings 18

House built on the sand---Mt. 7:24-29

Every earthly plant---Mt. 15:13

### II. Some who did not build in vain

Noah---Gen. 6:7-11:7

Moses---Ex. 36 and Heb. 8:5

Christ---Mt. 16:18

### III. We also build

1 Cor. 3:5-15

We are to build true Christian character, using the building blocks of honesty, integrity, purity, kindness, purity, courage etc.

The church collectively works to build up the cause of Christ in the community where it exists.

Building the true church in any community depends upon gospel obedience.

Faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism in water for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38

Building on the true foundation also includes scriptural worship every first day of the week. Acts 20:7



## **ALL THINGS NEW**

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2 Corinthians 5:17

### **I. A New Covenant**

Promise---Jeremiah 31:31-34

Mosaic Covenant was national---Heb. 8:12-13

New Covenant is world wide---Mt. 28:19-20

### **II. A New Creature**

Become so by the new birth---John 3:5

New in thought---Phil 4:4, Prov. 23:7, Mt. 12:34

New in conduct---Romans 6:3-4, Col. 3:1-2

### **III. A New Name**

Isa. 62:2, Acts 4:12, Acts 11:26

### **IV. New Garments**

Put off the old man---Col. 3:8

Put on the new---Col. 3:12

Above all---Col. 3:14

Whole armor of God---Eph. 6:13

### **V. A New Diet**

2 Peter 2:2, Matt. 4:4

### **VI. A New Occupation**

1 Cor. 3:9, 2 Cor. 6:1, 2 Timothy 2:15

### **VII. A New Home**

John 14:1-2, Rev. 22:14

## **PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY**

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James 1:22-25

### **Its Perfection**

1. In Revelation

1 Cor. 2:4; Gal. 1;11-12; Eph. 3:3-6

2. In Design

Psalms 19:7; Jno. 8:31-32; Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess. 2:14; Titus 3:4-5

3. In Revealing Power

James 1:22-24; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:3

4. As A Standard of Conduct

Romans 12:1-4; Gal. 5:16-23; 2 Peter 1:5-11

### **Its Liberty**

1. From The Bondage of the Law

Gal. 5:1; Romans 7:4-6; Col. 2:14

2. From The Guilt of Sin

Rom. 6:1-4; Rom. 1:16-18; Gal. 2:27; 1JPeter 1:22-23;

2 Cor. 5:17

### **Not A License To:**

1. Change God's Law

Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18

2. Change The Worship

John 4:24; Mt. 15:9

3. Commit Sin

1 John 3:4-8; John 8:21



## **WHAT CONSTITUTES ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP?**

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John 4:24

### **I. Opposites of Acceptable Worship**

#### **a. Ignorant worship**

Acts 17:22-24; Romans 10:1

#### **b. Will Worship**

This is a worship of human intention, consequently performed from one's own will. Col. 2:23

#### **c. Vain Worship**

Mt. 15:19

### **II. Characteristics of True Worship**

#### **a. The Right Object---God**

Ex. 20:3-5; Mk. 12:28-30; Rev. 22:9

#### **b. The Right Motive---In Spirit**

Willingly—2 Cor. Cor. 8:12

Orderly—1 Cor. 14:40

Reverent—Heb. 12:28

Sincere—Phil. 1:10

Humble—1 Peter 5:5-6

Individual—Rom. 14:12

Pure—John 4:23-24

### **III. The Right Way---In Truth**

John 8:32, John 17:17

## ASTONISHED AT HIS DOCTRINE

Mt. 7:28-29

The sermon of Jesus in Mt. 5,6,7 is often referred to as the greatest sermon ever delivered.

Those who heard were made to remark “never a man spake like this man.” They were indeed astonished at His doctrine.

### I. Astonished At His Doctrine Later

The doctrine of Christ was revolutionary during his personal ministry, but astonishing even after he returned to the Father. “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Even today many continue to be astonished at the doctrine of Christ.

### II. Astonished At The Doctrine of One Church

Mt. 16:18, Acts 2:47, Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18, Eph. 5:23, Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:25, Eph. 3:21, Mt. 15:13.

### III. Astonished At The Doctrine Regarding The Name

Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16.

### IV. Astonished At The Doctrine of Baptism

Mark 16:15-16, John 3:5, Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21, Gal. 3:26-27, Rom. 6:3-4, 1 Cor. 12:13.

### V. Astonished At The Strictness of His Doctrine

3 John 9, Prov. 14:12, Rev. 2:14.

### VI. Astonished At The Simplicity of The Doctrine

2 Cor. 11:3.

## **DECLARING GOD**

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Acts 17:16-29

1. God is the creator of the universe

Prov. 16:4

2. God is One

Deut. 6:4

“Whatever thy heart clings to and relies on, that is properly thy God.”

Forms of Idolatry: Nature, Pleasure, Hero, Money, etc.

3. God is Spirit

John 24:4; Luke 14:39

4. God is Omniscient—He knows all.

2 Peter 1:19

Nothing is hidden from God.

5. God is Omnipotent—All Powerful.

Psa. 119:1; Gen. 17:1; Rev. 4:8

6. God is Omnipresent

Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psa. 139:7-10

7. God is Infinitely Just

Psa. 89:14

8. God is Infinite in Goodness

Psa. 145:9

9. God is Eternal

Psa.90:2

10. God is Unchangeable

James 1:27

11. God is Love  
1 John 4:8

## A NEW RELIGION

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Heb. 8:8-13

Fallen man needed to be rebound to God. Religion served that purpose.

Christianity is new and original.

Hebrews 10:19-20; Acts 17:19-20; Mark 1:27

Christianity is not an addition to Judaism, not a new patch on an old garment.

Matthew 9:16-17; Romans 7:1-4; Hebrews 2:4

1. It is new in that it is the only one that offers the remission of sins.

The Law of Moses did not: Heb. 9:15; 10:4.

The New Covenant does: Heb. 8:12 John 1:29.

2. It is new in that it offers eternal life.

John 1:25; John 14:1-3; 1 John 2:25

3. It teaches the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Heathen religions taught no such relationship.

“Our Father...” Mt. 6:9

4. It teaches humility as the road to greatness.

“He that would be great let him be your servant.”

Luke 9:46-48; Luke 18:12

5. Required the death of its founder for its completion.

Heb. 9:16-17

6. It is Missionary

Unlike Judaism and heathen religions, Christianity seeks to win the world.

Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16

## **WHAT IS DEATH**

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(Funeral Sermon)

I. Death is not: the means of converting a wicked person into a Christian---Luke 16:19-31.

Death is not: the extinction of man.

Both good and bad continue to live after death.

II. Death Is:

1. Certain---Romans 5:12

2. Uncertain, as to time---James 2:14

3. A departure---2 Timothy 4:6-8; Gen. 35:18; James 2:26

4. Emancipation---Freedom from a body racked with pain, sorrow, disease, disappointment, and temptation.

For those who are righteous, a rest from labor waits.

Rev. 14:13 - "The former things have passed away."

5. Transportation---Death provides a means of transporting the faithful child of God from a world of sin and sorrow to the blessed city of the redeemed.

1 Cor. 15:50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

"Corruption puts on incorruption"

6. Home going---John 14:1-4

“Called home from service to reward, called home from toil to rest.  
The soul from earthly scenes hath gone, to dwell among the blest.  
Called home from rugged paths of time, to tread the street of gold.  
Around thee lies a land sublime, all glorious to behold.”













