

E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom

"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.
Change the way you think and act, and believe the Good News."

Mark 1:15 GW

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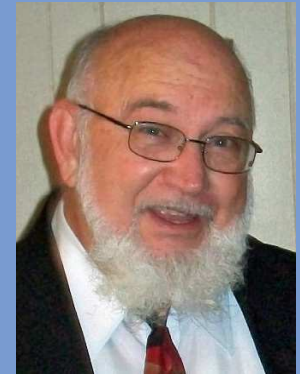
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*DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S COMING
KINGDOM TO BE ESTABLISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS*



EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Kent Ross - Wally Winner



NCD

The General Conference of the Churches of God was jarred when Gary Burnham shared statistics regarding the state of health of the churches across the country. Attendance was markedly down. The average age of those ministering was disturbingly high. Fewer and fewer young people are deciding to enter the ministry due in part of discouragement by parents, by low salaries and by disheartening experiences with local ministries.

In response the Conference is proposing that churches work with the Conference and the Natural Church Development concept. It, in essence, does not focus on helping a church to grow, but helping a church regain its health.

Churches in a cooperative effort with Conf. personnel, evaluate seven or more areas and rate a church's health on these factors. In the following year the weaker factors are addressed and an effort made to correct and enhance them in the life of the church.

Now this is probably a gross over-simplification of the concept, and more should be said about it, but we encourage the Conference in their effort to help churches. Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus Christ is accomplished in the local church, whether rural, suburban or urban. If the Conference, by asking local congregations to assess their health, then can encourage their health, the thought is that growth will naturally occur.

We'll anxiously await the experience of the first churches to work with the Conference in implementing the program. It is clear that something needs to occur as seemingly the last days of this Age are coming upon us. The church needs to be doing all it can to be a haven for people to find a hope that transcends this faltering age that is apparent to all with eyes open to the prophetic picture in the Bible.

Concerns About the King's New Clothes

Remember the story of Hans Christian Anderson about the new clothes the king was wearing, or not? Some scamming tailors had convinced the king to allow them to provide him with a wonderful new suit of clothes. In fact, they had no wonderful cloth at all, but by directing thje king to observe it, and he being unwilling to say the obvious truth that he couldn't see the cloth, went along with the deception of the new cloth's beauty. They sewed and sewed, or so it seemed from their discussion, and finally finished their new, magnificent, wonderful suit of clothes for the king to wear in the coming parade through his kingdom. As the king marched, thinking of himself dressed so finely, it was the voice of a little child from the crowd who finally had the courage to tell the truth that the king wasn't wearing any clothes at all!

The information Mr. Burnham shared was startlingly blunt, and perhaps not welcomed by some, but it was truth. Under past leadership, collecting of such data was forbidden and unknown. These statistics were corroborated by a collection of similar statistics by the Church of God History Committee.

Now the Lord told us that the gates of hades would not prevail against His church, but we are also reminded that when the Son of Man returnsa, he posits for us "shall He find faith on the earth."

While difficulties may abound, we should neither be delusional about what is and what isn't! Two lessons from Jude come to mind:

Verse 3 – “³ Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”

Verses 20-23 – “²⁰ But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh

PM Netanyahu to meet President Obama for crucial talks and more

As you read your newspapers and listen to the television newscasts, you are aware of the tensions in the Middle East that portend possible nuclear war. Most want desperately to avert such an eventuality, and perhaps they can.

Maybe the Prime Minister and our President can reach a concord that will keep the peace there, such as it is. While it may be possible for them to avert Iran’s insane declarations of such, be assured that a war will surely come to pass.

Prophetically, the day will come when Israel will stand alone against the Arab nations, but seemingly also against all the nations of the earth. For years that seem so unlikely as the United States had always stood firmly with Israel, but as we have seen this present administration give conflicting signals. But it seems that day will come when the United States and some western allies will all abandon their support for Israel and she will seem to be standing alone.

But for those who understand, it is then that the Lord God will send His Son as the nations learn who is in reality King and whose world this is. Before it gets better, it must get worse, but we assuredly know IT WILL GET BETTER when times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord and He send Jesus until the time of the restitution, or restoration of all things (Acts 3:19-21).

Though frightening days, these are also thrilling days for God’s people!

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Let Me Introduce You To My God

By Dennis Baldwin



God and his Son are portrayed in the Bible as being two separate individuals, persons, as I see it; who I am looking forward to see. A lot of people have; but we have not seen Jesus. We anticipate his return to the earth so we might see him in all his glory. (1 Peter 1:8) No one has seen God; (1 John 4:12) but we know the pure in heart will see him. (Matthew 5:8) With these points in the back of our minds, let me point you to this saying of Jesus:

- John 17:3 *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The first thing I notice about this saying is how it is framed as to what is important: *“This is life eternal.”* Now; let me ask, if I may, how important do you think it is to know God and his Son Jesus? According to Jesus, eternal life is dependent on this knowledge. Eternal life is dependent on knowing God and his Son Jesus. I would think that ranks it at the top of people/things I need to know.

How Important Is It to Know God?

The first part of the equation which our eternal life rests upon is to know God.

- *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.* John 17:3

The next thing that should be noted in this verse is that it is a prayer made to God by Jesus his Son. Jesus did this often.

- *But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.* Luke 5:16 (NASB)

The person/being to whom he prayed, he called “God”. In other places he called him **“my God”**.

- John 20: 17 *Jesus saith unto her... I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Questions About God?????

Who is God? Has anyone ever seen him? What is he like? Will we ever get to see his face? Does he have a name? Is He real? Do you know him? Is He a part of your life? Are you a part of His? Can you picture God at all? Is he your God? Do you feel like He is your Father? Do you feel like He is your creator?

God created us in his image, so we must look something like God. This tells us a little about God, don't you think? Genesis 1:27 Notice how this is brought out in the creation narrative, so we can get the sense of what that means. [*Adam begat a son, Seth, in his own image according to his likeness*]; similarly, God created man in his image according to his likeness.

- *This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.2 He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. Gen 5:1-3 (NASB)*

You might be surprised to know that God has a mouth. Matthew 4:4

God is referred to in a very personal way when Isaiah referred to "God himself". Isaiah 45:18

At the proper time God himself will dwell with men. Revelation 21:3

The angel Gabriel could actually stand in God's presence. Luke 1:18 Jesus is currently in the presence of God. Heb. 9:24

Jesus can stand at the right hand of God, Acts 7:54 and can sit at God's right hand. Romans 8:34

God has fingers. Exodus 31:18

The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, his ears are open unto their prayers: the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. I Peter 3:12

God even has eyelids. Psalms 11:4

God's servants will one day see his face. Revelation 21:4

God has a name. Matthew 6:9

Who is God to you? Is He real? Do you know Him? We need to see God as God and to revere and to worship Him in a very real way. God needs to be real to us. We can see Him today; but only by faith and *faith comes by hearing which comes from the word of the Lord*. Romans 10:17 We need to see him today as Moses did when he forsook Egypt, by faith. Hebrews 11:27

Getting to know God has been and continues to be a very important issue with God and with His Son. God gets excited (*I delight in these things*) when his creation gives a high priority to understanding and knowing him. Then they can become aware that he exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth.

- *Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for [I delight in these things]," declares the Lord. Jer 9:23-24 (NASB)*

God made it very plain that *no man could see his face in live*. Exodus 33:20 Jesus made it very plain that *the pure in heart would see God*. Matthew 5:8 Some things can be understood about God by observing his creation. Much can be learned by observing his orderliness and being mindful of his great power. Much can be gained by "*considering the heavens, the work of God's fingers, The moon and the stars, which he ordained*"; Psalms 8:3 To deny God's existence is the plague of modern

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man as was his proclivity from the very beginning. *“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer,”* Romans 1:28 (NASB)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE DON'T KNOW GOD?

God called Moses in a miraculous way. He also called Aaron to meet with Moses in the wilderness. Under the LORD God's instructions; Moses and Aaron went into Egypt and demanded that Pharaoh *“let my people go.”* Exodus 4:27, 5:1 His response seems to be a logical response:

- *“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord.* Ex 5:2 (NASB)

PHARAOH

Pharaoh's problem was twofold. This twofold problem has plagued humanity from the beginning. *“Who is the Lord?”* and *“I do not know the Lord.”* That is a sure fire path to destruction. If you were to follow the future events in the life of Pharaoh, you will understand what I mean. Exodus 14:28 If there is someone we ought to know, it would be our creator.

ELI'S SONS

Eli was a great prophet of God. He must have known God. However, for some reason his sons did not carry on the tradition. *“The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.”* I Samuel 2:12 As a result, Eli charged them with *“Making the LORD'S people to transgress”*. You know how it works; *“If the prophet's sons can get by with sin, why shouldn't we?”* They were actively involved in the temple work. What was wrong? Why didn't they know God? Do you suppose that Eli was busy with the Lord's work and did not observe the lack of training they were receiving?

SOLOMON

David exhorted his son Solomon to *“know the God of his father and to serve him with a perfect heart.”* I Chronicles 28:9 It is evident from the Scriptures that Solomon did not follow the counsel of his father David. Following his fall we have no record of Solomon changing his life. How sad!

- *For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.* 1 Kings 11:4 (NASB)

ISRAEL

You know the story. The Israelites by the power of the LORD GOD found their way into the land of promise. After the deaths of Moses and Joshua, the next generation, *“did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.”* Judges 2:10 (NASB) As a result, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and forsook the LORD God of their fathers. The anger of the LORD was hot against Israel and consequences were severe. This was a result of *“not know the LORD”*.

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A PAPER TIGER

Before you knew God personally, you were enslaved to so-called gods that had nothing of the divine about them. 9 But now that you know the real God—or rather since God knows you—how can you possibly subject yourselves again to those paper tigers? Gal 4:8-9

(MSG)

When we say “**know God**” something needs clarification which Paul makes plain. Any god which is not “the real God” is nothing more than a “**paper tiger**”. It may look and act like a tiger but in reality is only made of paper. That seems interesting to me. I have read much material about the Trinity God. I find it to be but a “**paper tiger**”. This god might look real by its definition but is not authentic for it only appears on paper. The “**One God of Israel**” is genuine. Many millions have subjected themselves to a god which is only a “**paper tiger**”. “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.*” Deuteronomy 6:4.

IS GOD YOUR GOD?

I really like the MSG translation of that Corinthian passage. “***There is no God other than our one God.***” I Corin. 8:4 I invite you to own that statement about God. Don’t leave it unclaimed on the pages of the Bible. “*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*” James 2:19 (KJV) When we say that there is no God other than our one God, we are claiming for ourselves, God as our God. God wants us to be connected to him. He wants to be our God.

Moses said: “*The Lord **our God** is one Lord:*” Deut. 6:4 A God we must love with all our heart, soul and might; A God we need to talk to our children about when sitting at home; to speak of while walking by the way; to make sure that our family remembers when we lie down or rise up.

We must connect with God in our lives and with his Son Jesus. How can that connection come about? Jesus’ instructions on the surface might seem complicated, but as we look deeper we will find it to be otherwise. Ask the Lord Jesus to help you to try these instructions on, fitting them to your needs and to his desire for your life:

- **Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly.** “*The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I’m not keeping it to myself; I’m ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen. 28 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. 29 Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. 30 Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matt 11:27-30* (MSG)

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The Trinity: Will It Qualify as Monotheism When Jesus Judges?

By Anthony Buzzard

It has been the concern of biblical unitarians throughout church history that the claim of “Orthodox” churches to be monotheists may in fact put “orthodoxy” itself in jeopardy, these are serious issues. They require that every believer accept the challenge to study and analyze his current understanding of who God is. The issue demands also that those instructed in biblical monotheism harness all the energy they can muster to help others understand the monotheism of Jesus.

It is perilous to ignore the words of Jesus (John 3:36. etc.). Salvation is offered only to those who obey Jesus, which is the meaning of “believing in him.” Jesus makes that point over and over again. He surely foresaw, and warned against, the awful tendency to rest in the mistaken idea that believing *just* that Jesus died and rose is sufficient for salvation. Paul himself has been misrepresented in Romans 10 to support a popular view. Paul indeed spoke of the death and resurrection of Jesus constantly, but in Romans 10:17 he summarized his argument by telling us the true source of true faith. “Faith comes by hearing [he uses that word to denote the Gospel, cp. Gal. 3:2] and hearing by the word of Messiah.” “The word of Messiah” takes us back of course to the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel as preached by Jesus in Mark 1:14, 15 (not just a gospel *about* Jesus). Hebrews 2:3 stresses that we are to believe the Gospel “which was first preached by Jesus.” We neglect this at our peril. Salvation comes to “those who obey Jesus” (Heb. 5:9). Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-3 lists elements of the Gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus, as “amongst matters of first importance” (*en protois*). They are not the *only* matters to be believed. The Kingdom of God and belief in that coming Kingdom is still the first and central element of the Gospel (Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:43; Acts 8:12; 19:8, 20:24, 25:28; 23, 31, etc.).

Since the words of Jesus are to be the essential heart of Christian faith, we must ask: How obedient are churches to Jesus’ first and foremost commandment? “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29; Deut. 6:4). Jesus here agrees entirely with a Jewish scribe on the vital issue of defining the true God. “There is no other but He,” is the enthusiastic response and agreement offered by the scribe. “He” of course is a singular personal pronoun denoting a numerically single Person, not Three. The quintessential heart of true faith in Jesus is compliance with his insistence that “the Lord our God *is one Lord.*” not two or three persons in One God.

It is usual for readers of Mark 12:28ff to overlook the first of the three imperatives. Yes, we are to love God and our neighbor, but there is a primary imperative which precedes the command to love God and neighbor. It is the imperative “hear,” and it demands an intelligent understanding

of who the true God is. He is a single Lord. He is the “Lord our God,” of Hebrew faith. He is the God of Jew’s (Rom. 3:29) and the God of Jesus, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Has the Church been faithful to this primary command of Jesus? I want now to examine the classic *Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* of 1917. My interest is in seeing how that learned dictionary manages to steer its way, in the article on the Trinity, to a justification of the Trinity? My strong impression is that the learned writer is not up to the impossible task of moving seamlessly from the clear biblical witness to Jesus’ definition of God (Mark 12:29) to the *later* dogmatic declaration that God is one Being [*ousia*) in three distinct hypostases. The writer’s discussion is a fascinating attempt to convince us that the now “official.” dogmatic definition of God as Triune can successively be harmonized with the clear words of Jesus in Mark 12:29. But if one reads carefully, one sees that he fails.

Our author begins with the **Revelation of God in the Gospels (*Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, p.760. art. Trinity)**

“The witness of our Lord’s consciousness as revealed in the gospels...He certainly regarded himself as the Messiah and the names and titles by which he described himself and permitted others to describe him are messianic in their significance...He stands in a relationship of unique intimacy with the Father (Matt. 11:27). He calls God ‘my Father.’ [He enjoys] a cloudless serenity in his relationship to God...He speaks as one who sees clearly into the heart of God...He lives a life which is wittingly and willingly all that God would have it to be...He claims distinctly certain Divine attributes and privileges. He is King and Judge of all. He is to be the object of most absolute trust and devotion. No sacrifice is too great to be made for his sake...To reject him or his messengers are to reject *GOD* and to incur the severest judgment. “All things have been delivered to me by my Father” (Matt. 11:27). [Cp. the Great Commission]

“When we turn to the Fourth Gospel we find this teaching expressed with a fullness and clearness of statement which ought not to appear extraordinary...John gives us a revelation of the inner life of that wonderful Personality. What is extraordinary is that the inner history, as we have it in John’s gospel, does not reveal any essential element which cannot be found expressed or implied in the external histories of the synoptic gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke].”

No one, I think, can take exception to this fine statement. But there is no evidence here of a Trinitarian Jesus, one who would be acceptable to today’s “orthodoxy.”

The author then proceeds to treat the issue of Jesus’ view of God in the gospels.

The Revelation of God in the Gospels. “We must never forget that Christianity was built on the foundation of Jewish monotheism. A long providential discipline had

secured to the Jewish people their splendid faith in the One and Only God: ‘Hear O Israel. Yahweh your God is one Yahweh, and you are to love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.’ This was **the corner stone** of the religion of Israel. These were perhaps the most familiar of all sacred words to the ears of the pious Jew. They were recited continually. Our Lord himself had them frequently in his mind (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:28; Luke 10:27).”

But this is precisely what churchgoers today seem to have forgotten and ignored. They assemble under a creed which is *not* that of Jewish monotheism! According to the Trinitarian Seventh Day Adventists, some 23 million of them, “the keystone of our theology is that ‘one plus one plus one equals one.’” This should be compared critically with the cornerstone of the theology of Jesus! Are Trinitarians sailing under false colors?

(Continuing the article on the Trinity in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*). “That Jesus thought of God always as the Supreme One is unquestionable. Indeed the very idea of Fatherhood, which with our Lord is the characteristic conception, becomes in his teaching absolutely monotheistic because absolutely universal. To the Jewish mind the sovereignty of God was the natural and characteristic thought. In our Lord’s teaching the Divine Fatherhood overshadows and also transforms the Divine Sovereignty but never threatens to dissolve the pure and splendid monotheism of the original doctrine... In the teaching of our Lord there are three degrees of the Divine Fatherhood. God is the universal Father. He is, in a very intimate and special way, the Father of the disciples of Jesus. He is, in the highest and unique sense the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... We find then that the teaching of Our Lord and of the gospels concerning God is the union of a true and unwavering monotheism with a great doctrine of mediation according to which God and man enters into a very close relationship in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

If the article had then added in support of its major point the wonderful monotheistic words of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God and one mediator between that One God and man, the *Man* Messiah Jesus,” all would have been well, and an article on the Trinity would have been totally unnecessary. But the article now goes on to waffle its way into some sort of bridge to the Church’s later denial of the excellent words said of monotheism so far!

The essay continues by referring to the “modern philosophical and theological terminology” which is used to create a doctrine of the Trinity. No attempt is made to justify the non-biblical use of philosophical language. The author continues by saying of Jesus, “His Ego had a distinctness and concreteness surpassing any other human being who ever lived. Our Lord was very man and his Ego had all the self-possession and concreteness which give to every human soul its personal distinctness. While we find, in his self-revelation, that he constantly entered into a communion with God, which is quite without parallel in human experience, and

that he knew the heart of God from within, we also find him always distinguishing himself as a Person from the Father. There is no trace anywhere of the breaking down of the boundaries of the personal life...Jesus' utterances reveal no displacement of the centre of personal life. This personal distinction may be seen dearly in the following passages. They are among our Lord's greatest utterances: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father...The Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels. Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels...Not what I will but what You will. Father into your hands I commit my spirit. My God, my God why have you forsaken me? My Father works hitherto and I work. I and the Father are one. I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me." These examples are selected out of a great number. The fourth Gospel is especially rich in such passages...Jesus also said 'You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they also may be one in us.' "I in them and You in me that they may be perfected into one."

This good statement indicts at once the amazing belief of "Oneness Pentecostals" that the Father and the Son are the same Person. It also makes utterly untenable the belief held by Jehovah's Witnesses that the Son is himself really an angel incarnated as a man! No one could gather such an idea from John or the synoptics.

The author then notes that John is emphatic about "the humanity of our Lord, yet he is our clearest teacher about the Divinity." Note here that the ambiguous word "divinity" is slipped in. This is itself a "fog-term" allowing for various understandings. The author's purpose is to lead us imperceptibly to the notion that the Son is fully God, Deity, and thus a member of a Triune God.

First, however, the author is frank enough to concede that the Son is subordinate to the Father. As proof he cites Mark 13:32. "No one knows the day [of the Second Coming] except the Father. Even the Son does not know." Our author adds: "Here is a clear assertion of the subordination of the Son." When it comes to the inferiority implied by Jesus in the saying, "The Father is greater than I," the author tries to produce this as a proof of the "divinity" of Jesus because "for a mere man to say this would be monstrous or absurd."

But there is no absurdity if Jesus is not "a *mere* man," if by that is meant an ordinary man. The Jesus of our New Testament is a sinless, virginally begotten man, uniquely human.

The stage is now set for a very "waffly" demonstration that Jesus was God. The argument fails to address, however, or rather forgets what it earlier conceded, the patent fact that Jesus in Mark 12:29ff fully commits himself to the **unitary monotheism of Israel**. If Jesus is to be our teacher, dare we disregard or depart from his plain confirmation of his unitarian heritage?

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “You call me rabbi and lord and you do well” (John 13:13). This can hardly mean, “but you are free to disregard my primary command to believe that God is a single Lord.” “You are free to assemble under a Trinitarian umbrella about which I said not a word.” It appears that Jesus, attempting today to join an evangelical or other church, would be barred from entrance, since he could not possibly sign the Trinitarian faith statement! The Lord Jesus can well complain, “Why do you call me lord and refuse to do what I say” (Luke 6:46): “Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”

The issue is critically important. Is our faith to be based on the recorded witness of Jesus or are we at liberty to set aside his teaching, his theology? The answer ought to be obvious, and it should also lead to some profound soul searching. If we believe in the creed of Jesus, are we at liberty to join in the worship of churchgoers who do not espouse that unitary monotheistic creed? Can we appear in church with confidence, knowing that the Trinitarian view of Jesus is held as the central creed?

Knowing of Jesus’ clear confession of God as the One God of Israel, how can we commit ourselves to anything but Jesus’ own confessed definition of the Father as “only one who is true God” (John 17:3)?

Commentary presents the “orthodox” version of Christianity as untroubled by what Jesus taught about God. The prestigious *Word Biblical Commentary* makes this amazing statement. It questions why Mark would bother recording Jesus’ affirmation of the Shema (Deut. 6:4 in Mark 12:29). First the author of the commentary on Mark observes that Bultmann said “the special interests of the Church are not in evidence” in Mark 12:28ff. He then agrees with Bultmann. “It is difficult to understand how and why Jesus’ affirmation of the Shema, which is neither remarkable nor specifically Christian, would have been created by an early Christian prophet,” His point is that the recorded saying of Jesus, defining God, must surely be genuinely the words of Jesus. But he gives himself away with his astonishing remark that Jesus’ affirmation of the Shema is “neither remarkable *nor specifically Christian*” {*Commentary on Mark 8-16*. Craig Evans, pub. Thomas Nelson. 2001. p. 261). The point should not be missed. Apparently the teaching of Christ at the most essential point of defining the true God is not remarkable or important for us today! Christ, then, can be happily divorced from his teaching, and the Church can go confidently on its way, disregarding the theology of Jesus. This points surely to a huge need for a reformation of the Reformation, to achieve a real return to Jesus, allowing for the savior’s words to be the controlling factor of all Christian teaching.

Dr. James Dunn in his recent “*Did The Early Christians Worship Jesus?*” gives us reason for hope that the Trinitarian system may reconsider and return to Jesus — may in fact thus be revived- (Revival is not achieved by anything less than a revolutionary return to the Gospel and words of Jesus!). Dr. Dunn must be read carefully — and he not infrequently blunts clear statements with various qualifications and retractions, but he does say this: “The New Testament

writers are really quite careful at this point. Jesus is not the God of Israel, he is not the Father, he is not Yahweh” (p-145). The New Testament writers “recalled that this was Jesus of Nazareth, who affirmed the same monotheistic creed as they did, who forbade worship to any other than God and who prayed to God as an expression of his own need and reliance upon God” (p. 145). “In an important sense, Christian monotheism, if it is to be truly monotheism, has still to assert, that only God, only the one God, is to be worshiped” (p. 146).

But how can this possibly be as long as the Church clings to a creedal statement which Jesus could not have recognized?

We join Dunn in his plea for conformity with Jesus’ definition of God, though we suggest that Dunn might have expressed himself more forcefully. He does say that “there are some problems, even dangers, in Christian worship if it is defined too simply as worship of Jesus. If what has emerged in this enquiry is taken seriously, it soon becomes evident that Christian worship may deteriorate into what may be called Jesus-olatry. That is not simply into worship of Jesus, but into a worship that falls short of the worship due to the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I use the term Jesus-olatry as in an important sense parallel or even close to idolatry. As Israel’s prophets pointed out on several occasions, the calamity of idolatry is that the idol is in effect taken to be the god to be worshipped. So the idol substitutes for the God, takes the place of God. The worship due to God is absorbed by the idol. The danger of Jesus-olatry is similar: that Jesus has been substituted for God, has taken the place of the one creator God. Jesus is absorbing the worship due to God alone” (p. 147)

Admittedly Dunn remains confident that Trinitarian Christianity is somehow still monotheism. But the crucial question should not be obscured. What is the theology and teaching of Jesus as declared by his uncompromising adherence to the Shema of Israel, defining God as a single divine Lord? If we are to take Jesus’ seriously (and we must!), what right have we to modify in anyway the creed of Jesus, agreed to and affirmed also by a Jewish scribe?

A powerful confirmation of the fact that Jesus has not approved any revision of Deuteronomy 6:4 is found in the repeated use of Psalm 110:1 across the pages of the New Testament, it is that crucial verse which has received scant attention from many commentators. Its testimony when revealed is an embarrassment to the notion that “Jesus is God.” Psalm 110:1 defines the identity of Jesus precisely *not* as deity, but as the supremely exalted human being (cp. exactly 1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus is the *adoni* (my lord) at the right hand of Yahweh. Yahweh and *adoni* ought never for a second to be confused — but they have been, when a capital L appears on the second lord in many translations, signaling to the unwary reader that the underlying Hebrew is the title of Deity, *adonai*. But the Hebrew (translated exactly by *kurio mou*, “to my lord.” in both LXX and NT scripture) is positively *not adonai*, creating an impossible “God to God,” polytheistic conversation. However exalted Jesus is, he remains the “man Messiah,” the non-

Deity lord (*adoni*) of Psalm 110:1. So careless with this distinction have been much commentary and translation, that the second lord has been reported as *adonai*, Lord God, and not as it is, *adoni*, a non-deity lord in all 195 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.

Richard Longenecker, in his commentary on Galatians, in the celebrated *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 142 notes that “the second part of Galatians 2:20 is a citation of the quintessential confession of all Jews, the great deuteronomic utterance known as the shema, that God is one. He then cites Betz (*Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 172, 173), “the process of divine redemption requires conformity to the oneness of God.” Romans 3:30 repeats this fundamental teaching about who God is. God is said to be “*eis*” (one, masculine). And the meaning of course is “one person” not one “essence.” Paul is writing not just as a Jew, but as a Christian. Ought not the creed of Paul to be ours too? Only then are we subject to apostolic scriptural teaching, which is also the teaching of Jesus. We suspect a hidden antipathy to the Jewish creed of Jesus and Paul. This needs to be corrected.

Inadvertently “orthodoxy” gives itself away. William Lane in his *Word Biblical Commentary on Hebrews* observes of Hebrews 11:12 that the Greek “*aph’ enos*” means “from one person.” The reference is to Abraham. But the very same use of “one” (*eis*, genitive *enos*) regularly describes the One God of the Bible. The Emphasized New Testament renders Galatians 3:20 correctly, “God is [only] one [*eis*] person.” As long ago as 1849, the Rev. Richard Treffry, jun., in a massive defense of the Trinity in his *Inquiry into the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 129. noted that “*eis*, [one] in the masculine means one person.” This is an elementary fact of the Greek language and is echoed in the article we cited from *The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*. Vol. II. p. 761: Observing that in John 10:30 (“I and the Father are one”) the Greek has the neuter *en*, the writer explains that the masculine *eis* [one] means one person.

This simple language about God as one Person, reflected in 1300 NT occurrences of “God” meaning a single Person, the Father, has had to give way to the fearfully complex concept of a “one and three” God. Is this not a rather obvious assault on the Lord Messiah’s unitary monotheism which in Mark 12:28, 29 he describe as the most important of all theological issues?

Is this not also an affront to billions of Moslems and millions of Jews?

The alarming departure of Trinitarian “orthodoxy” from the plain words of Jesus requires urgent attention. Christianity we may fairly say, is the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder’s creed. This should be considered a world disaster.

restorationfellowship.org

“Jesus is Still a Jew” at YouTube

We Will Always Remember...

Our Wonderful Friends from Fort Valley and Maurertown

By Jan Stilson

The Maurertown Church of God closed its doors sometime in the middle of the 1980s. I was the Librarian at Oregon Bible College and Gene was the Academic Dean, at that time. We were sad about it. We had been in the ministry at Maurertown and Fort Valley right after our marriage and served there four years from 1963 to 1967.

The members of Fort Valley and Maurertown (pronounced Morrietown) had built a new parsonage next door to the church in Maurertown. It was brick because Jimmy Powell was a brick mason and he did the work for next to nothing. Jimmy and Donna were



members at Fort Valley. Donna could sing like an angel and we always encouraged her to make a record album (33 1/3 rpms were the technology back then), but she never did so far as I know. Jimmy was a guitarist, too, the best kind because he could play like Chet Atkins. He had to be careful because laying bricks could injure his pickin' fingers.

We drove over the Massanutten mountains from the Woodstock side and down a windy road into the Fort Valley. The first time over the mountain with its hairpin turns took my breath away from fright. What if the brakes failed? I couldn't think about it, but we liked to go that way once in awhile because it was so beautiful. One time a mother bear and two cubs crossed the road in front of us. She chose not to attack.

In Fort Valley, the elders were Sam Boyer and Garnett Coverstone. These two men also sang in a quartet with two other men from the valley not Church of God members. They had quite a reputation up and down the valley and sang for a lot of community affairs. Sam also sang duets with his daughter Dorothy when she visited home. She was at Oregon Bible College while we pastored in Virginia. When she was home Dorothy played the piano and I played the organ. Dale Ramsey was the eldest son of Fulton and Ellen (Van Fleet) Ramsey. Dale took piano lessons in high school and got to be pretty good. He wanted to learn to play the organ so I gave him lessons on the electric organ, a small, reedy-sounding instrument that had one keyboard of notes and 12 or so pedals on the floor. It was not a concert performance instrument, that's for sure. After I showed him the basics I recommended he find a teacher in a local church and take lessons at that church. So he began to study on a larger organ and majored in music at E-town when he went off to college. Of course, we know his history at OBC and ABC and we've always been quite proud of Dale as he was one of our youth group.

Fort Valley had a new church, also built of brick. It was a lighthouse in the valley. People always came for our special meetings, Christmas programs, and other special events. The small church would be packed. It was great. Some of the people who came from that church to serve the Lord at OBC included Dale, Lynn Boyer who died in a tractor accident one year at Thanksgiving, Joanne Coverstone who married and died much too young of cancer. They had been children when Gene and I lived there. One of the saddest events at Fort Valley was the death of Lynne's little brother, Larry, age 6, from leukemia. He fought



a valiant fight but lost the battle. Gene officiated at that funeral and I will never forget that day. I could probably go right to that grave even now.

The Maurertown church had been built or purchased around 1880 or so. It was a typical square, white-framed building and behind it sat a two-story white-framed dormitory. The Virginia state conference was held here every summer and it fell to the pastor at Maurertown to organize the conference. Every year we had a great time of classes, preaching and eatin' some mighty fine southern cooking. Those from a distance stayed in the dorm. Gene was the male chaperone and someone also stayed with the females. Not me at the time because I'd just had two babies. Everyone who stayed in the dorms came over to the parsonage basement and took showers. That way, we could guarantee the teens smelled sweet each evening at church!

The McIntyres and Morrisons were two family names prominent at Maurertown. Gertrude Morrison was Esta McIntyre's daughter. Esta lived with Gertrude and her husband, Frank. Frank was a Lutheran but he came to church with Gertrude and supported the work in every way. He was a prince of a man and helped us out a lot.

Frank and Gertrude's daughter, Carolyn had just married French Chapman before we arrived in town, and they resided near D.C. Carolyn attended church where Joe Fletcher preached. Carolyn died recently from recurring breast cancer, a great loss of friendship to us.

W.E. Boyer was a descendant of the original Boyers who began the Maurertown church. W.E. was the local bank president, and it sure came in handy to know him. He was a great man and very dedicated and spiritual. The first week we were in the parsonage and young couple came to Gene and asked to be married at the church. They had their license in hand. They were going to come back on Friday and get hitched. This was on Wednesday or Thursday and all of a sudden it came to him that Virginia law might have some things to say about marrying people. W.E. Boyer walked Gene across the street to the court house, paid to have him bonded (\$500) and Gene married the couple next day.

There are many happy memories of times with the youth group: Gene and the kids hiking in the mountains; Jan and the Senior Ladies having spring luncheon in Winchester and having a flat tire on the way home; driving the windy road into the Fort Valley which edged a rapidly flowing mountain stream with a nice little drop-off in an ice storm. If you weren't careful you could float away. Then, there were the warnings to Gene: "Don't stop to pay a pastoral call at such and such a house. They make moonshine there and they don't cotton to strangers." And, the perplexed musings of the Fort people, "There's always a light up on that mountain at night. We don't know what it is. Nobody lives there." Aliens?

As Yankees there were small colloquialisms to become acquainted with but we stumbled through it. A commode is not a small dry sink; it is a bathroom. A waist was not the thing around your middle; it is a blouse. They didn't say "it's raining" but rather, "it's puttin' down." A highway was not the road; it was the pike. If an elder disagreed with the pastor he didn't say "no," he said "it doesn't seem to suit." And we loved it all especially the weekly radio program we recorded at the studio. Gene did the preaching; I cued in the music.

There were other memories of visiting the White House with Cecil Smead and one of his members who worked there, and of visiting Luray Caverns with the youth group when Rick turned off the lights during the sunrise to sunset light show. Pure black.

We toured all of Virginia while we lived there and came back after leaving to tour some more historical spots: Jamestown, Williamsburg, Antietam, Mt. Vernon, Harrisburg for Christmas shopping. There are

EFFECTIVE ELDERSHIP

By John Carr

ELDERS AS SERVANTS OF THE LORD

Elders are pastors and teachers and therefore are among the chief gifts to the church. God gave “some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11) “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (performing as deacons)” (v. 12a). This service properly rendered will result in “building up the body of Christ” (12b) so that “we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (v. 13).

To be effective as a pastor/elder/teacher you must first know who you are in God’s kingdom. James and John learned this lesson the hard way. These two disciples, along with their mother, once stepped up to Jesus and demanded, “Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and one on your left” (Matthew 20:21). Jesus told them that authority was not in his hands to grant. Only Yahweh God, his Father, could make such appointments. But Jesus taught this valuable lesson, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant (deacon), and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served (cared for by a deacon), but to serve (do the work of a deacon), and to give his life a ransom for many” (vs.25-28).

To lord over others is the way of the world. But Jesus said, “It is not so among you.” It’s like Peter once wrote concerning the elders, the spiritual guides of the church, that they are to “shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, not for sordid gain but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3). Being great in Jesus’ eyes does not involve subduing others under your authority. Quite the contrary, being great in the spiritual realm involves becoming the servant, the diakonos, the deacon of others. “The greatest among you shall be your servant (deacon)” (Matthew 23:11; see also John 13:4-5, 12, 15-17; Philippians 2:3-8).

Any of us who take the name of Jesus as our Savior and are willing and eager to be called Christians acknowledge that he is our Lord Jesus Christ meaning Jesus is master over us and we are his slaves, his servants.

He is master because Yahweh God made him so. Yahweh chose Jesus, He anointed him to be King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). It remains for us to bow our knees willingly before his throne and submit ourselves humbly to hear and to heed what he commands us to do.

ELDER AS EXAMPLES TO OTHERS

Paul wrote to Timothy “let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity show yourself an example to those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:12). He was telling Timothy to concentrate on these qualities, build them up in your life. By them Paul believed Timothy could present himself as a mature leader in his work.

Dr. Jack Lewis, professor at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee, provides the meaning and function of the Greek words associated with church elders as exemplified in Timothy. His insights give an excellent summary of the duties to be performed by elders. He observed, "The Greek terms we've considered from the viewpoint of the elder emphasizes images of sacrifice and service that he is to discharge rather than images of authority. From the viewpoint of the people, the elder is an example that is to be followed, a teacher from whom to learn, a shepherd whose voice one hears, a protector from the wolves, a leader to whom one submits in humility because he is God's steward, and he is an older man to whom respect is gladly given." (Harding College Bulletin, April, 1979, p. 5). Below are scriptures related to these key qualities.

Speech (Word) – Matt. 12:3-35 Make the tree good, and its fruit good...for the tree is known by its fruit....The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good (see also Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; 1 Pet 3:15).

Conduct (Conversation) – 2 Cor. 1:12 For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you (see also 1 Thes. 2:10-12; Jam. 3:13; 1 Pet 1:14-15; 1 Pet 2:12; 2 Pet. 3:11).

Love (Charity) – 1 Cor. 13:4-8a Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (see also Gal 5:22-23; 1 Jn 4:7-11).

Faith – Heb. 11:1, 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen....Enoch...obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him (see also Jam. 1:22; 2:17, 18, 24, 26).

Purity – Phil. 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

(see also Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; Heb. 10:19, 22; Jam. 1:27; Jam. 3:17; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn 3:3).

ELDERS AS SPIRITUAL LEADERS

It is well said that, "Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others. One man can lead others only to the extent that he can influence them." (J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, p. 19). Lord Montgomery is quoted by Sanders in defining leadership in this manner: "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence." Miller pl 71

Below are ten leadership attitudes Waylon D. Miller (The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church, p. 74-76) indentified in the life of Paul that exemplify what elders need to express in their own lives and service.

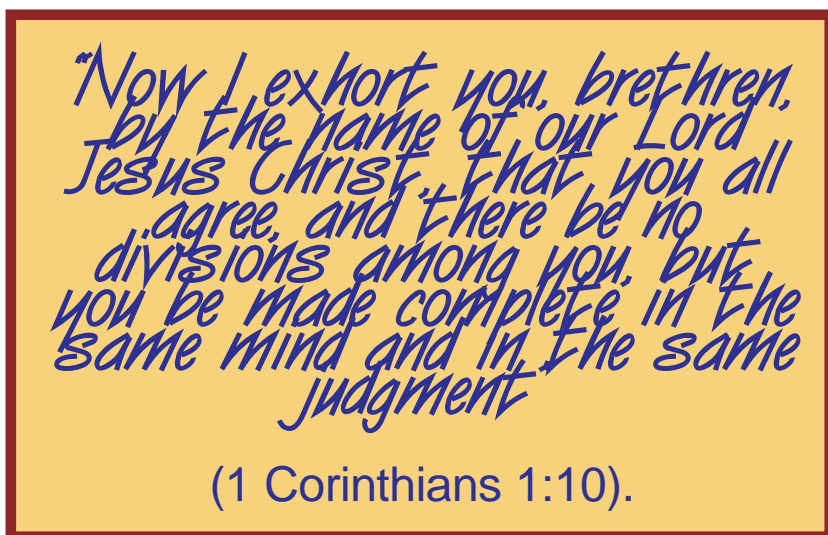
Did not seek popularity – please God, not men. (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4).

Possessed integrity - deal honestly with others. (1 Thessalonians 2:5).

Gentle – deal with sensitiveness and gentle affection. (1 Thessalonians 2:7).
Compassionate – tender, feeling, sensitive, emotional. (Rom. 9:1-5; Acts 20:18-19).
Complimentary – generate warmth and appreciation. (Acts 26:2-3).
Humble – no inflated sense of self-importance. (Ephesians 3:7-8).
Unassuming – desire to stand in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
Aware of his humanity – acknowledge weaknesses. (1 Corinth. 2:3; Acts 18:9-10).
Self-effacing – view self as eminently unworthy of grace. (Eph. 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15).
Served sacrificially – willing to give up all for Christ. (Philippians 3:7-10; Gal. 6:14).

ELDERS UTILIZE TEAMWORK – UNITED LEADERSHIP

As a servant of Christ Paul spearheaded the efforts to keep what works he had started alive and thriving, and he depended on fellow-workers to accomplish this task. They worked as a team and as a result their influence was quite pronounced and effective. He told Timothy, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the key task of faithful servants of the word of God. Teach it so others learn it well enough to teach it to others.



*“Now I exhort you, brethren,
by the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ, that you all
agree, and there be no
divisions among you, but
you be made complete in the
same mind and in the same
judgment”*

(1 Corinthians 1:10).

When working as a team there is always the concern as to how all the members of the team come to agreement on any issue. Paul reminds us, “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). That is a tall order especially since we all come to the table with different perspectives,

Consensus is the goal. A definition of consensus is “group solidarity in sentiment and belief; general agreement; unanimity; collective opinion.” Among these definitions the word unanimity is the strongest which means “being of one mind; agreeing; formed with or indicating unanimity; having the agreement and consent of all” (From Webster’s Dictionary). That last phrase, “having the agreement and consent of all,” is key to achieving acceptable consensus without demanding absolute unanimous agreement. So how can this kind of consensus be achieved?

First, there must be a will among the collective group to come to a consensus.

Scriptural teachings must be the bases of the agreement.

Asking God’s guidance and direction must be part of the equation.

Solicit knowledge and personal experiences of members of the team.

Seek research on how others have handled the issue.

Most decisions do not involve life and death and can be reconsidered.

Consensus means a decision is made which all are willing to support, to try fairly, and to be willing to adjust as necessary to improve as conditions warrant. The important thing is that all agree to support decisions made and to help make it work to the benefit of all.

ELDERS AS SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

Jesus gave clear insights comparing the duties of elders to shepherding a flock of sheep. Jesus is the chief shepherd and the example of all those who elect to perform similar duties in His church. Every elder should thoroughly understand Jesus' teaching on this principle as found in John 10:1-14.

From another viewpoint below is an excerpt from a booklet written by Edward E. Werner in 1996 entitled *The Elders of the Church*, Church of Christ, 775 W. Donnelly Avenue, Coos Bay, Oregon 97420. Mr. Werner identifies the following areas of leadership, directing and service that he believes are involved in overseeing an assembly of believers by elders.

Teaching, Preaching, Advising. Overseers don't do all of the teaching in a congregation, but they oversee all of it to be assured that the proper instruction is given to the congregation. The elders are the "directors of Christian education" in the church (I Timothy 5:17).

Public Worship. Elders oversee the Lord's Supper service, prayer, music, stewardship; and finances, and anything else that involves the public worship assemblies of the church.

Benevolence. The local Church of Christ, under the oversight of its elders, is to care for its truly needy members. The elderly and the shut-ins must know that the church loves them and cares for them and is ready to assist them in any need that they may have (James 1:27).

Evangelism. The elders help the church realize and carry out this important purpose of the church. They lead the church in supporting those who "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:16; III John 5-8).

Spiritual Welfare. They oversee the spiritual welfare and growth of each member of the congregation (Ephesians 4:13-16). Elders provide a well-rounded program to include and actively involve all the members for their personal development (Ephesians 4:12).

Dissension/Conflicts. Elders stop dissension and resolve conflicts in the congregation. "Be on guard for (1) (themselves) AND for (2) all the flock" against false teachers (Acts 20:28-30).

Judgments/Decisions. Pastors make needed judgments and decisions for the benefit of the entire congregation.

The tasks of elders are daunting but yield most rewarding results. Jesus said, "The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). The key is to remind yourself every day of one of the tasks elders are to do and seek ways to exercise it. Over time you integrate many of the qualities and traits into your work of service. This in turn will result in becoming an effective elder.

It is a true statement that anyone whose goal is to serve as an elder has his heart set on a good work. 1 Timothy 3:1 (ERV)

Explaining Matthew 28:19

By Steve Katsaras (stevekatsaras@hotmail.com)

This verse has widely come **baptismal formula** amongst many in the church and is perhaps the strongest text found in the Bible that supposedly proves that God is a Trinity¹ of which was spoken directly by Jesus himself!

The question that needs to be asked is whether this assertion is true? Was Jesus expressing the doctrine of the Trinity to his disciples by introducing this formula? The following study is an examination of the verse of which I hope to use a range of method to highlight the weight of evidence for/against each argument.

Q: does the Bible elsewhere teach baptism in the threefold name?

A: No, it does not.

Q: Does the Bible elsewhere teach baptism in a one-fold name?

A: Yes, it does – in the name of Jesus.

When we read over the book of Acts, we see the apostolic instruction and practice regarding baptism. For examples, at the day of Pentecost, Peter instructed the crowd who were pierced to the heart to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ²; after receiving the gospel from Philip the Evangelist, many Samaritans were baptized in the name of the lord Jesus³; Cornelius and his household were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ at the preaching of Peter⁴.

It seemed the apostles were practicing baptism a little different from what apparently Jesus commanded. In every instance cited, baptism was performed in the name of Jesus, not in the name of the FSH⁵. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul argues against divisions by using the ordinance of baptism. He challenged the divisors by saying,

1 Cor 1:13, "Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

1 Cor 1:15, "...that no man should say you were baptized in my name"

Paul recognized that Christian baptism was performed in a one and only name – and like Paul, we know of course, that was it not in Paul, Peter or Apollos, but in the name of Jesus and not a three-fold name.

Q: Can the typology of baptism reveal whether the baptismal name is one-fold or threefold?

A: Yes, it can.

¹ Trinity = the union of the 3 divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in 1 God

² Acts 2:38

³ Acts 8:16

⁴ Acts 10:48

⁵ FSH = Father, Son, Holy Spirit

In his epistle to the Romans and the Colossians, Paul describes the symbolism of baptism as a participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ⁶. His instruction is clear: when a sinner repents and is baptized in water, they are identifying themselves in the finished work of the cross and in the name of the one who undertook that work, namely Jesus. Christ alone died, was buried and raised again, not God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Hence baptism in the NT was conducted in Jesus name, not in the FSH.

Q: Can the consequence of baptism reveal whether the baptismal name is one-fold or threefold?

A: Yes it can.

There is a spiritual responsibility that comes with baptism. Paul said that when we are baptized into Christ we come to be clothed in him [Christ]⁷ and our identity is found in him. Our act of baptism is a public declaration that we intend on living out our lives in the likeness of Christ, in whom we are identified with. Paul repeatedly commands Christians to **put on the lord Jesus**, but is silent about **putting on** the FSH. Therefore, the baptismal name is in Jesus name, not in the Trinity.

Q: Is there anything else in the Bible analogous to water baptism in the threefold name?

A: No, there is not.

Q: Is there anything else in the Bible analogous to water baptism in the one-fold name of Jesus?

A: Yes, there is.

The NT is filled with numerous examples regarding the authoritative name of Jesus. For example, Christians are taught to believe in the name Jesus; the promise of the Holy Spirit would be sent in the name of Jesus; eternal life would one day be realized in the name of Jesus; the apostolic practice of healing was commanded in the name of Jesus; salvation can only be received in the name of Jesus; evangelism was carried out in the name of Jesus; miracles was performed by the apostles in the name of Jesus; prayer and thanksgiving is encouraged in the name of Jesus; and there are many more⁸...

As a matter of fact, Paul summed it all up in when he said,

Col 3:17, "...whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the lord Jesus"

The repetition is striking and the Christian principle simple – whatever we do, of which this includes the practice of baptism, we are commanded to do everything in the name of Jesus – yet the name of FSH, this Trinitarian formula is extremely silent in the pages of Scripture!

It seems that the corpus of the NT points the way toward the one-fold name of Jesus, not in the threefold name of FSH. Outside of Matthew 28:19, this Trinitarian baptismal formula has found no place in the book of Acts or in the rest of the epistles. It seems the apostles were quite silent on this all important truth.

So, what is to be done with this text, then? How are we to interpret and understand it? Firstly, I think it well if we can examine it grammatically. Let's see it in the Greek...

⁶ Romans 6:3 – 4; Colossians 2:12

⁷ Galatians 3:27 – 28; Romans 13:14

⁸ John 3:18; John 14:26; John 20:31; Acts 3:6, 16; Acts 4:12; Acts 4:18; Acts 4:30; Ephesians 5:20

“μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη,
βαπτιζοντες αυτους εις το ονομα του πατρος και του υιου και του αγιου πνευματος”

Many have stepped forward with probable interpretations in an attempt to harmonize this text with the rest of the NT. One such argument sounds something like this:

- The word **name** (ονομα) is singular, not plural (ονοματα) – implies one name – Jesus.

The counter-argument that follows is:

- The word **name** (ονομα) is singular, with three nouns (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and the conjunction **and** (και) – implies three names.

To put these arguments to the test, we shall explore a similarly designed sentence in English. If someone were to ask me, “what is the **name** (noun) of your **father** (noun) **and** (conjunction) **mother** (noun)?” my answer would rightly be, “my father’s name is John and my mother’s name is Vicki.”

In this example, the two nouns “father, mother” that are connected together with the conjunction “and” are mutually tied to the noun “name” and so grammatically speaking, the question is really asking for two names, of which the answer is correct. So is the case with the Trinitarian baptismal formula. Grammatically, this verse is broken up as follows,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the **name** (noun) of the **Father** (noun) **and** (conjunction) the **Son** (noun) **and** (conjunction) the **Holy Spirit** (noun)...”

It is clear that this statement is really asking for three names, not one. It is asking for the name of the Father and the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit and rightly so – for it is implied that all three are persons and that all three are supposed to have a name! The problem is that the NT speaks nothing about baptism in the threefold name of FSH.

At this point, we are confronted with an apparent contradiction that requires asking some serious questions. What if the Trinitarian baptismal formula is really not supposed to be in the Bible? What if the Trinitarian baptismal formula was a latter addition into the text?

To answer these questions, we turn to the Greek manuscripts, especially to the earliest known, surviving ones to-date. They are,

- Codex Alexandrinus (400 – 440)
- Codex Sinaiticus (330 – 360)
- Codex Vaticanus (325 - 350)

After some investigative work, it is clear that all of these manuscripts contain within them the Trinitarian baptismal formula. But how about Greek manuscripts earlier than the Codex Vaticanus that perhaps include the ending of Matthew’s gospel? Sadly, the only surviving manuscripts are really just fragments of papyrus that contain a sentence here, a paragraph there – 96 papyrus fragments have been found that date back into the 2nd century – but unfortunately none of them contain Matthew 28:19!

What happened?

In 303AD, Roman Emperor Diocletian⁹ unleashed persecution against Christians throughout the empire. In addition, he ordered the destruction of all the Christian Scriptures. In Caesarea, there existed a theological school and library where some of the great church fathers came to study. Its theological library won the reputation of having the most extensive ecclesiastical library, containing more than 30,000 manuscripts! Under the persecution of Diocletian, some of this library was destroyed – but enough survived to continue to transmit the NT!

Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁰ was a Roman historian, biblical scholar and Christian polemicist. He became the bishop of Caesarea in 314AD. Regarding the persecution of 303AD, Eusebius writes "I saw with mine own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down and razed to their foundations and the inspired and sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market place."¹¹

It is critical to note the reason why these earlier manuscripts housed in this library are important – because at present, all surviving Greek manuscripts are copies printed **post** the Council of Nicaea of 325AD – and it was at this Council where the Trinitarian concepts began to officially shape the mind of the Christian church.

Is it possible then, that Matthew 28:19 may have been altered after the Nicene Council to include the Trinitarian baptismal formula? Is it possible that there may in fact have been manuscripts that pre-dated Nicaea that would have read Matthew 28:19 somewhat differently? If true, then would it be possible to support this without any manuscript evidence?

The only plausible option at this point would be to turn to patristic writings that **were penned prior to 325AD** to determine an author's use of Matthew 28:19. With that, we'll examine several pieces from the works of Eusebius of Caesarea. The following are several citations...

"...but the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, 'Go ye, and make disciples of all nations in my name.'"¹² (emphasis added)

"...what king or prince in any age of the world, what philosopher, legislator, or prophet, in civilized or barbarous lands, has attained so great a height of excellence, I say not after death, but while living still, and full of mighty power, as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind with the praises of his name? Surely none save our only Saviour has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by the event, saying to them, 'Go ye, and make disciples of all nations in my name.'"¹³ (emphasis added)

"All nations are invited to come consider the awe-inspiring deeds, which God performed in behalf of his people, in Egypt, in the Red Sea, in the Jordan; and to reflect that he who could

⁹ Diocletian (244 – 311)

¹⁰ Eusebius (263 – 339)

¹¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 8, Chapter 2

¹² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5

¹³ Eusebius, *Oration in Praise of Emperor Constantine*, Chapter 16, Section 8

confute his enemies of old, is still powerful against them. Hence we should rejoice in him, who by his power endureth forever. We should understand these words of that saying of Christ: **'All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going make disciples of all the nations in my name.'** Wherefore Aquila translates it: 'who exercises authority in his power forever.'¹⁴ (emphasis added)

"That Christ's voice was endowed with power is evident from his deeds; for when he said to his disciples: 'Come, follow me, and I shall make you fishers of men,' he actually fulfilled this promise by his power; and again when he commanded them saying: 'Going make disciples of all the nations in my name,' he manifested his power in very deed"¹⁵ (emphasis added)

"From the preceding verse we learn that the earth shook and trembled. This was realized when Christ entered Jerusalem, and the entire city was in consternation; also when the nations of the world trembled upon hearing the words of the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles. How should we understand the prophet when he says that Christ's way is in the sea, and his paths in many waters, and his footsteps will not be known? This passage receives light from his promise to his disciples: **'Going make disciples of all nations in my name.'**"¹⁶ (emphasis added)

"...this command seems to be given to the disciples of our Saviour. Since they are messengers of good tidings, they are called messengers, and light ones, to distinguish them from the apostles of the Jews. Wherefore the prophet addresses these messengers of good tidings thus: you disciples of Christ, go as the Saviour himself has commanded you: 'Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel', and **'Going make disciples of all nations in my name.'**"¹⁷ (emphasis added)

"...for he who said to them, **'make disciples of all nations in my name'** also forbade them to establish churches in one and the same place"¹⁸ (emphasis added)

Remarkably, the works of Eusebius before 325AD seem to have him frequently quoting Matthew 28:19 without the Trinitarian baptismal formula – in exchange for the phrase “in my name”, a sure sign of the one-fold name of Jesus! One historian, who read all the works of Eusebius, published the following statistic regarding how many times he quotes Matthew 28:19 in his writings. The results were staggering: 17 times Eusebius cites Matthew 28:19 with the phrase “in my name” and not the Trinitarian baptismal formula!

Could then the writings of Eusebius be a faithful attestation to earlier, lost manuscripts regarding this all debatable verse? It needs to be considered that Eusebius did live in Caesarea where he had access to the theological library and some 30,000 manuscripts of the Biblical canon. It is also probable that this library also housed an Aramaic version of Matthew's gospel (now lost) that may have rendered Matthew 28:19 differently (as Eusebius cites).

¹⁴ Eusebius, *Commentary of Psalms (Psalm 65:5 – 6)*

¹⁵ Eusebius, *Commentary of Psalms (Psalm 67:34)*

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Commentary of Psalms (Psalm 76:20)*

¹⁷ Eusebius, *Commentary of Isaiah (Isaiah 18:2)*

¹⁸ Eusebius, *Commentary of Isaiah (Isaiah 34:16)*

If Eusebius' citation of Matthew 28:19 ('make disciples of all nations in my name') in his pre-Nicene writings is the accurate rendition of this verse (derived from earlier 2nd century manuscripts), how then can it be proven that this verse was somehow altered later on in history? We need only to look again at Eusebius' post-Nicene works. One such example...

"...believing each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Ghost truly Holy Ghost, as also our Lord, sending forth His disciples for the preaching, said 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'"¹⁹ (emphasis added)

Striking! In the aftermath of the Nicene Council, it seemed Eusebius' quotation of Matthew 28:19 in his letter now possessed the Trinitarian baptismal formula. This followed Eusebius in his writings during the latter part of his life, yet quite infrequently – he seemed to have used it a mere 3 times. Some historians have suggested that the phrase "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" may have been used as a battle-cry by the orthodox against the adherents of those who were declining to include the Spirit in a Trinity of persons as co-equal, con-substantial and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. It is quite possible now that this Trinitarian baptismal formula may have made its way into the textual copying process by scribes.

What then does this mean regarding Matthew 28:19? It is highly suspect that this verse may have been altered from its original version. Consider how the verse may have been read before/after the Nicene Council...

Pre-Nicaea: *"...make disciples of all nations in my name..."*

Post-Nicaea: *"...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."*

From the comparison above, let's consider which of the two would fit the NT corpus better? Would it be the first or the second? Quite frankly, it would be the first. Consider how the context of Matthew 28:19 would have read before the alteration...

*"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority have been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations in my name**, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."²⁰*

Reading this seems to harmonize the context perfectly. The singular personal pronouns Jesus used of himself in **verse 18** ('...given to me...') and **verse 20** ('...all that I commanded...') fit wonderfully now when **verse 19** is read the same way: '...the nations in my name...' and the obedience of the apostles carrying out this great commission is accurately portrayed.

Let's further our witness by including quotations from other leading scholars...

¹⁹ Eusebius, *Letter to Caesarea*

²⁰ Matthew 28:18 – 20

"The command to baptize into the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion. Instead of the words, 'baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' we should probably read simply 'into my name.'"²¹

"The command to baptize in Matthew 28:19 are thought to show the influence of a developed doctrine of God verging on Trinitarianism. Early baptism was in the name of Christ. The association of this Trinitarian conception with baptism suggest that baptism itself was felt to be an experience with a Trinitarian reference."²²

"This text is dismissed almost contemptuously as being 'no word of the Lord.'"²³

Conclusion

Even though all current surviving Greek manuscripts of today have Matthew 28:19 rendered with the Trinitarian baptismal formula, it seems rather that it was a later addition following the events of the Council of Nicaea. From patristic writings like Eusebius that pre-date Nicaea, his use of Matthew 28:19 seems to indicate, not a Trinitarian baptismal formula, but a "Jesus only" formula. This is strengthened by the canon of the NT where nearly every epistle penned by the various authors exhort the church to do all things in the name of our lord Jesus Christ, not some Trinitarian three-fold name. All of this is suggestive that the words "in my name" may have been the original authentic words of Matthew 28:19 and the real words spoken by the mouth of Christ.

All the evidence uncovered in this study is to show that perhaps Matthew 28:19 was never intended to express God as a plurality of persons, nor a Trinity. The Christian practice of baptism was/is a believer's identification in the cross of Jesus.



²¹ Peakes Bible Commentary, Page 723

²² Theological Workbook of the Bible, Page 29

²³ Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma

Memories of Mexico Missions

By Rachel Carr



It was a privilege and a blessing to serve as a missionary in Mexico. My first introduction to the work there actually began with a visit to Blanchard, Michigan, where Dean Moore was pastor. A Mexican minister in the area, Alberto Moreno, was acquainted with Mexican migrants who worked on the surrounding farms, and he asked if he could hold services for them in the Blanchard Church. I was glad that I could attend one of those services. When the workers returned to Mexico, Dean Moore and Pastor Moreno traveled there to visit some of the men. A little later the Dean Moore family moved to Mexico and began working with interested people. In January 1966 I joined them and spent the next 3½ years teaching, preparing materials, helping with the music, visiting people, and doing other things as needed.



In addition to holding services in Saltillo where we lived, we made trips to different villages for visiting, teaching, and preaching. We often met in peoples' homes for our meetings. When we had Bible school for the children and divided into classes I remember that we used different rooms in different houses, including the kitchen and bedrooms. But it made no difference to the children; they could do their handwork on the bed, at the kitchen table, or on their chair or bench.

One of the things we enjoyed in preparing classes for the children was recording puppet skits on tape. Sometimes we translated scripts from English and other times we just read from the Spanish Bible. It was fun to get together with the church people in Saltillo to record the scripts and do the sound effects for such stories as Noah and the ark and Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

One of the highlights of my first year in Mexico was the visit of the Berean Youth Caravan in the summer of 1966. Eight young people came with adult sponsors, Bill Wachtel and Paul Shaw. Dean Moore and I joined them for their travel south to visit three church groups. We visited the people in the villages, inviting them to the church that evening and handing out Gospel literature. The services included special music in Spanish, some testimonies, group singing, and a pantomime play with Spanish narration, followed by more visiting with the people. The Mexican



church groups were encouraged, and the young people had a never-to-be-forgotten experience in short-term missions work.

In the fall of 1966 two families from the south, one of which was the Roberto Badillo family, came to Saltillo so the men could find work and the children could go to school. While they were in town we had training classes for these folks in our home twice a week. Dean Moore taught Systematic Theology, and I led some classes in teaching methods and music. A total of 8 adults and 6 young boys attended at various times.



Later when the Moore family moved to Texas with concerns about their health and their children's education, Alice Aldrich from Blanchard, Michigan, came to help with the Mexico ministry. In addition to working with the Saltillo group, we made trips to some of the nearby villages. Then God provided the opportunity to have a "Saturday School" in our home.

Children often came to the door asking to carry away the garbage, polish shoes, wash the car – any little job to earn some money. One day when some boys came, I invited them to go with us to Sunday school, telling them that we sang songs, had stories, colored pictures, etc. They said they wanted a story right then. So I told them a Bible story with flannelgraph figures. Later they came back with some more boys and asked for another. The next day six children came for a story. So we asked them all to come back on Saturday morning. And they did come – 20 of them the first couple weeks, and more as time went on. We had as many as 56 boys and girls at one time with a total of 90 different children on the roll. We were glad for the opportunity to teach these young ones about God and His Son Jesus, and trust that what they learned had an influence on their lives.



There were a lot of holidays, parades, and celebrations in Mexico, many of which commemorated special days in the history of the country. Twice the president of Mexico visited Saltillo, and there were many preparations made for his visit. Men hurried to repair bad streets. They worked day and night to finish a new school. They painted, swept, and cleaned so all would be ready for him. It made me think how good it would be if the people spent as much time and effort in preparing to meet King Jesus when He comes.

Alice and I were invited to participate in a wedding by being sponsors. In Mexico the custom is that the couple to be married asks various people to sponsor certain things for the wedding. Alice was asked to choose and print invitations, and I was to provide a white Bible to be given to the bride and groom. Others furnished the refreshments, flowers, church decorations, etc. All of the sponsors were to march in the wedding procession.



Bro. and Sr. Roberto Badillo and sons, Labor Vieja, Mexico

We bought the items, Alice made our dresses, and we were ready for this new experience. However, our plans were changed when I needed an emergency appendectomy just a few days before the wedding. I appreciated having a fine surgeon who spoke good English, and I was thankful to the Lord for His good care.



A number of people have made trips to Mexico over the years to visit and to serve in various ways. I was privileged to be a part of eight different teams that went to put on a summer vacation Bible school in Labor Vieja where Lupe Badillo lives. These groups of 8-13 people, representing Churches of God in 11 states, worked well together to present Bible stories, lead the songs, guide craft projects, play games, and serve refreshments to the Bible school children. In addition, a number of the teams spent the afternoons making repairs and improvements on the church building and on Lupe's house. It was good to reconnect with Lupe Badillo and her family and to work with the fifty Church of God young people and adults who served on these missions trips from 2002-2009.



I appreciate the vision and the commitment of Dean Moore and his family in stepping out in faith to go and begin the work in Mexico. I am grateful to Harold Doan, Stan Ross, the General Conference Board of 1965, and the delegates to that summer's conference who listened to a young woman who wanted to go to Mexico, and helped make it possible for her to do so. The faith and the faithfulness of Roberto Badillo, one of those migrant workers at the Blanchard services, and his wife Lupe, who still teaches a children's class, have been a great testimony to many — Americans and Mexicans alike. Alice Aldrich Badillo, with her interest in missions and desire to help the Mexican people, was an asset to the work. I appreciate Judy Myers' excellent work in preparing materials and organizing and leading the summer VBS teams that traveled to Labor Vieja for many years. Our thanks to the members of the Harlingen, Texas, Church who over the years have excelled in hospitality, when we went there regularly to renew travel documents and as the recent VBS teams have passed through.



Most of all, we praise God for His faithfulness and for the way that He has worked through the many who have been involved in ministry in Mexico. Only He knows what eternal fruit may result from the work done among the Mexican people.

Christ's Call to the Kingdom, not Heaven!

By Paul Duncan

Recently, I was watching an episode of an older television series, "Little House on the Prairie". The plot was about Laura Ingles, one of the Ingles' daughters, who befriended the town recluse, considered to be a maniac by most of the town's people. As the plot unfolded, it became apparent that the real problem of this recluse was his inability to cope with the fact that his beautiful young wife had died shortly after they had married and built a lavish new home. Laura tried to comfort and console her friend, but he could not bring himself to accept the fact that his wife had died. He rejected Laura's efforts, refusing to even let her visit him because of her insistence that his wife was dead and not merely on a trip. Laura turned to prayer and the Bible, asking God for help in reaching her friend. The passage that she read is found in John 11 where Jesus was talking to Martha about the death of her brother Lazarus and the resurrection. The young girl read, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, the truth, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" She marked this passage in her Bible which she left for old man to find on the trunk of a fallen tree in his yard. After finding the bible and reading the passage, he was so touched by the words that he allowed the young girl to come see him again. Upon her visit, he read the passage to her. And, I thought, how amazing – the glorious hope of the resurrection and eternal life was being read right there on television for all to hear. However, my elation was short-lived because the old man turned to the girl and asked her to help him to believe that his beautiful young wife was in heaven with God and Laura responded that she would. The world had once more replaced God's glorious promises of the resurrection and eternal life in his kingdom here on the earth made new by its own vain philosophy of an eternal existence with God in heaven.

The sad reality of this is that most people accept this philosophy without ever looking to see what God's Word says about the hope and future of the believer in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. This is evidenced over and over as I attend funerals of friends and loved ones in which the minister and others talk about the dead person being in heaven with God and their looking down and seeing us and all the events taking place here on earth. They seem to revel in the thought of their future life in heaven with God. They never consider what God's word says about their hope of going to heaven, either at death or after the resurrection.

So, what does the bible have to say about this? Does the Bible confirm this idea of man going to heaven, or does it contradict it? In actuality, I have found that God's Word has very little in it about going to heaven. In fact, I have found just the opposite—that man does not go to heaven. However, I have found that it has much to say about the believer in Christ receiving eternal life at the resurrection and then entering God's glorious kingdom here on the earth made new. And all of this takes place when Christ returns to the earth and the earth is cleansed from all unrighteousness.

Let us consider God's Word in this matter. First, we find that the Old Testament prophet Isaiah tells us that God created the heavens and the earth and that the earth was formed for the purpose of being inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). And the earth, according to Ecclesiastes 1:4 and Psalm 119:90,

abides forever. Also, the Psalmist David tells us, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has he given to the children of men." (Psalm 115:16) Thus, the Bible indicates that the earth, not heaven, was created as the place where man is to live, while the heavens are for God. Since the earth abides forever, man will inhabit it and live there forever. Jesus was very specific about heaven when he told Nicodemus that no man had ascended up to heaven (John 3:13). Peter, who had been taught by Jesus, preached on the day of Pentecost saying that David had not ascended to heaven (Acts 2:34). Could it be that Peter and Christ, his teacher, were mistaken? After all, David was considered a man after God's own heart and surely he would have gone to heaven, if it were the destiny of the righteous to go to heaven at death. But, no, the scriptures indicate that man does not go to heaven. The scriptures tell us that man sleeps in the grave until God's call to come forth, either to everlasting life or everlasting destruction. (Job 14:12-15; John 5:28-29)

Secondly, the bible tells us that the righteous and the wicked will be rewarded in this earth. The wise man Solomon says, "Behold the righteous shall be recompensed (rewarded) in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." (Proverbs 11:31) The prophets tell us that the earth is going to be cleansed of unrighteousness and made new and God's glorious kingdom, which will last forever, will be in this renewed earth. Listen as Daniel the prophet speaks. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Daniel 2:44) "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Daniel 7:27) We should note that this kingdom's greatness is under the whole heavens, that is to say, on the earth. Isaiah tells us that God will create a new heavens and a new earth where the former things will not be remembered (Isaiah 65:17), where the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads (Isaiah 35:10), and where the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters covers the sea (Isaiah 11:9, also see Habakkuk 2:14). David also tells us, that the righteous shall inherit the earth and dwell therein forever (Psalms 37:29) while his son Solomon says that the righteous shall never be removed (Proverbs 10:30). We also find that the earth was promised to Abraham and his seed as an everlasting inheritance (Genesis 13:14-15; 17:7-8)

Jesus Christ, God's only begotten son, knew and understood what the prophets had to say about the kingdom of God. In his sermon on the mount, he used the very same language that David used—"the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11). Jesus urges and admonishes us to seek first and foremost this kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Every person on the earth has been called to the kingdom of God. Paul the apostle says in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." So, we have been called to God's kingdom through Christ Jesus our Lord. For we remember that Jesus spoke only the words that his Father had given him. Therefore Jesus Christ, the son of God, has also called us to God's glorious kingdom and glory. That is the reason that Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom and commanded his disciples to do likewise. For God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9b)

The kingdom of God and the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ our savior is the essence of the gospel, the good news. The gospel of the kingdom of God (in some instances, called the kingdom of heaven since its authority comes from God who is in heaven) is what Jesus taught and preached during his earthly ministry. (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43; Luke 8:1) Jesus also sent his twelve disciples, and later the seventy, forth to also preach the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matthew 10:5-7; Luke 10:1). However, we find that during Jesus earthly ministry the gospel was preached only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then, after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, he instructed his disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16) This gospel of the kingdom was so important that Jesus spent forty days after he was resurrected and before he ascended up to heaven teaching and speaking of the things that pertained to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). He wanted to make sure that his disciples were sufficiently prepared for their mission of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to every creature.

Jesus said, “For many are called but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14) Every person today has been called to the glorious kingdom of God. We are chosen by our believing on Christ and being baptized. It is now up to us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And as Peter says in 2 Peter 1:10-11, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And he continues, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of our God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:11-14) Yes, we are looking forward to the time when our faith shall be made sight. We are looking for the time when there will be a new heavens and a new earth. We are looking for time when the holy city, New Jerusalem, shall come down from God out of heaven and the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with us. We shall be his people and God shall be with us and be our God. (Revelation 21:1-5) And all of this takes place in the new earth wherein dwells God’s righteousness. We look for the time when “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 65:25).

In conclusion, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ has called us to the kingdom of God, our heavenly Father. That kingdom is going to be an everlasting kingdom, and it will be under the whole heavens. It will be in the earth made new and cleansed from all unrighteousness. It will be a kingdom where there will be no more pain, death, or sorrow. It will be a kingdom where God makes his abode with us and his will is done throughout the entire earth. That is why Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” The only way that God’s will can be done completely on the earth is for his kingdom to come. We are to seek that kingdom of God—for it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. And not once does the word of God mention the concept of “going to heaven.” That concept is totally foreign to the word of God and is merely the imagination and tradition of man. Therefore, let us embrace the true promise of God, so that we, as Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promises through Christ Jesus our Lord, will one day “inherit the earth and dwell therein forever.” Amen.

PROPHECY WATCH: CHRIST'S WARNINGS

PART 2

By David Hixon

Last time we started looking at the different warnings Christ gives us in the scriptures. We stopped at **Matthew 25** with the parable of the 10 virgins. Just to review... What did their lamps stand for??? The word of God, our Bibles. What did the oil stand for? God's Holy Spirit. Remember the foolish took their Bibles, but didn't have enough oil.

And here in verse 4, Christ is saying **verse 4**, *"but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps."* They've got both. They've got the Bible and prayer and yielding to God and being renewed every day in the Spirit of God. The inward man is renewed day by day, Paul wrote. And then, **verse 5**, *"Now while the bridegroom was delaying. they all got drowsy and began to sleep"*

Human beings have always been expecting Christ to come in their lifetime; and when it doesn't happen, people tend to get slack and lukewarm and drowsy and they sleep. They say, "Well, it isn't happening according to when we thought it was going to happen or was expected to happen." That's why we shouldn't set dates, but WE SHOULD be doing what Jesus told us to do. We'll take a look at more of those prophecies. Jesus told us exactly what to be looking for to know when we are closer.

He gave us specific events in areas of the world to look at. We know exactly where we should be looking and what we should be looking for. We'll see that in a little bit. And so, people begin to let down and get lazy. That's human nature. Without saying, "I can't let that happen; I to stay alert," we would all begin to sleep spiritually.

Verse 6-8 – *"But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'"*

Now, here is a very important lesson for us. This is a warning from Christ to all of us, **That we cannot grow for anyone else, spiritually.** You can pray for others but you can't pray **on behalf** of others. In other words, if you know somebody you love, let's say you're a praying person but they don't pray, you can't say, "It's OK that you don't pray. I will pray for you." It doesn't work. And if a person isn't developing that personal prayer life and personal relationship with God and being filled up with that oil in their lives, you're not going to be able to help them when the day comes because you don't grow in faith in a relationship with God just—(snap fingers)—like that.

It's something you learn and develop over a period of time—that yielded attitude, the daily habit of your spiritual life with God. It's something that each individual has to develop personally. Some do and some don't. That's just a fact.

I did a brief survey about how often and long people pray. Some said, "Five minutes a day. I'm busy." Some said not much. So what Jesus is telling us here, is when that day comes, at the end of the age, if a person hasn't been doing this along the way and filling up with oil and doesn't have the faith and the courage or all those qualities that it's going to take just to say, **"God, whatever happens, I trust you,"** and stand strong and stand firm... Here's what Jesus said:

Verse 8 – *“The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’”*

It’s like someone saying, “Boy, I wish I had the faith that you have. Boy, I wish I had the trust in God that you do. Boy, I wish I had the character that you’ve got.” You just can’t do it for anybody else.

And so, those who haven’t been using their time wisely and building a personal relationship with God—and we live in frightening, scary times—and they realize that the end of the age is close by, Jesus says they’re going to be running to those that have a relationship with God and saying, “Give me some of your oil. Can you help me? Can you give me some of your oil?”

Continuing **verse 8**, *“But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too...’”* You can’t give it to others. You can’t. I think the lesson is that you just say, “You know, I wish that I could just transfer what God has helped me to learn to you instantly, but it doesn’t work that way .” *go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.*” The lesson here is, you’ve got to go to God, who gives it. You can’t buy it, but the main point here is, go to God for the Holy Spirit.

Verse 10 says: *“And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and I’ve got this one really underlined in my Bible, “and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.”*

One of the most important lessons of all is right here in this scripture, and that is, while you have the time, **now** is the time and **every day** is the time to prepare.

I find it interesting that right after this Parable is the parable of the talents.

We know this parable very well. Why did the person with one talent not do anything with it??? **FEAR!** People will have all these excuses and reasons, “Well, I was afraid.” And so, we have to let God’s Spirit override that; and despite how sometimes we’re feeling in dealing with all of our humanness and anxieties or whatever it is, we make the right decision, to do what we know God wants us to do, to have the faith and the courage to do that.

What He is saying is, people who just make a lot of excuses and have a lot of excuses, He says, “I’m going to take away from them what they have and give it to somebody who will put it to good use.” And then, the scary scripture—and there are a number of them from Christ— **verse 30**, *“Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

I don’t think any of us want to end up the end of our life, the end of the age, falling into that category of just weeping and weeping and gnashing our teeth, “WHY DIDN’T I DO WHAT I KNEW I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO!”

Well these are warnings He gives people. People are not going to be able to say, “Well, nobody told me. Nobody warned me!” It’s right here in the word of God, plain and clear, from Jesus Christ. Let’s go to **Matthew, chapter 13**, and read this parable about the wheat and the tares. I’ll begin in **verse 24**. I think these are familiar parables to most of us.

Matthew 13:24-30 – *“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.”* like weeds growing, you know, in a good crop. *“The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves *said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’”* Do you want us to pull up all the weeds? *“But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.”* At times weeds grow right there, right next to

it and they're almost part of the root system of the wheat or the crop . *“Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”*

Drop down to **verse 36**, and Jesus explains clearly the meaning of this parable. He said, **verse 37**, first, He said to them:

Verses 37-43 — *“And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Again, indicating that a lot of people knew better. I can see why they're weeping and gnashing their teeth. They would never listen, never repent, never heed, never change, never grow And then Jesus said, *“Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear!”*

So many warnings. That's why it is so important to WATCH and take heed to these things and continue to help one another.

Let's go to **Luke, chapter 21** . Remember, earlier I was mentioning that Christ was very plain and clear what we need to be watching at the end time, what events? Well He spelled it out very clearly, VERY clearly that it was at the time of the end, too. Beginning in **verse 20** :

Luke 21:20-24 – *“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.”*

You and I know that the extreme radical Islamic nations hate Israel. Their main objective and goal is to destroy Israel, not just to destroy them but to wipe them off of the map. If they have to bring down America to do it, fine. That's part of it. But they hate the Jews, they hate Israel. *“...when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea, must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.”*

Christ was referring here to the things written by Daniel and other prophecies, that He would quote. *“Because these are the days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.”*

And you and I are living in these days, watching these things happen and develop. The king of the South and the king of the North, you can just see it coming. *“Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”* So, Christ was plain and clear, watch the Middle East.

He said to watch Jerusalem. Watch what's happening over there in Israel. Watch the Gentile nations around them, the non-Israelite nations, because what we're heading toward and seeing happen is the rise of the Gentile nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles, *“until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”*

In **Revelation 11:2**, it says that the Gentiles will trample the city of Jerusalem **for forty-two months. Very specific, very clear, three and a half years.** It tells exactly how long they will trample and control the holy city.

And that's the time that God raises up the two witnesses to do His work. So the encouraging thing to know and to always remember—we know that

doing God's work and doing His will is not about numbers and who's the biggest and who has the most this and that. It isn't about that.

God doesn't write down the numbers off our attendance board every week! He is more interested in a room full of COMMITTED CHRISTIANS that will follow Him and BELIEVE Him! Not just a room full of bodies in the seats.

It's about God looking for a heart and an attitude, a spirit, a yieldedness to Him, because at the end of the age, the way He finishes His work on earth **is only through two people.** And He can pour out all kinds of power, which He does, upon those two witnesses. Many miracles. And so it's very clear.

Notice **verses 27-28** *"Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place...."*

What does God tell us to do? When these things begin to happen? They're beginning to happen now! They've been beginning to happen now for quite a while, but very clearly these things are beginning to happen, all the things that you and I have known and believed for many years and decades, going on in the world around us,

Jesus says, when these things begin to happen, what are we to do? Get all discouraged and sad and give up and

quit? No, He says, in **verse 28** , *"straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

Next time we are going to look specifically what all these warning mean for US and what we need to be doing in the meantime. Until then... Lift up your heads, because your redemption IS drawing near!

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."
Matthew 25:13

