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Some Characteristics of Jesus As A Preacher

By Thomas Paul Simmons

(1898 - 1964)

Jesus was the greatest preacher of all time. He is God's perfect pattern for preachers. The gospels are the greatest books ever written on how to preach.



There is great need today that preachers make a fresh study of Jesus as a preacher. But not only do preachers need to study Him; churches need this study also. Churches need to be acquainted with God's standard of preaching so that they will endorse and support a faithful ministry. Let us note the following characteristics of Jesus as a preacher:

I. HE DID NOT HAVE THE INORDINATE DESIRE FOR NUMBERS THAT SOME MODERN PREACHERS HAVE.

On many occasions great multitudes followed Jesus. But He was not thereby flattered into petting and

pampering the multitudes so as to win them as His disciples. Rather He was wont in the presence of the multitudes to lay down the severest tests of discipleship and to utter the most scathing denunciations of sin. Some

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Christ's Call for Preachers

By A. T. Robertson

(1863 - 1934)

"And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13).

These words of Luke refer to the time when Jesus "went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued

all night in prayer to God" (ver. 12). Mark 3:14 says that

He "appointed twelve that they might be with him."

Matthew 9:35 - 10:5 does not name the twelve



A. T. Robertson

apostles till the Master sent them "by two and two" (Mark 6:7), on the third tour of Galilee. These men had been with Jesus for over a year, and now He was moved with compassion for the crowds, because they were distressed and scattered, "as sheep not having a shepherd." It is time for these men to try their hand at preaching and healing. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest." They were to pray for workers, and they were to go themselves. One seldom hears a

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The Exaltation of Stephen

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

"And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

Stephen is here standing before the council of the Sanhedrin. Stephen was one of the seven chosen by the church of Jerusalem to minister to the needs of the widows. There were qualifications given for those men to meet. Stephen was obviously one that men those qualifications. The Apostles said they were to look out **"men of honest report, full of the**

Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). **"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost"** (Acts 6:5). He was a man full of the Holy Spirit and faith and full of power



Jeff Short

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The Wheat and Tares

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941 - 2002)

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men



Milburn Cockrell slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder

came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn"

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The Jazz Age

By Roy Mason

(1894 - 1978)

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

There are two views of this time in which we live. These two views are as far apart as the poles. One is that sin and evil is growing apace, and that the world is terribly sinful and corrupt. The other is that the world is constantly growing better, and that we are nearing, with every day, the dawn of the Millennial era. The view that the world is fast approaching the Millennium is one that is largely



Roy Mason

engendered by the desire on the part of many to appear optimistic. This view has neither facts nor Bible teaching to substantiate it. I believe in being optimistic where optimism is possible, but when it is necessary for one to have to shut his eyes to facts and delude himself into believing a falsehood in order to be optimistic, then, I say, cast optimism

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"THOU HAST GIVEN A BANNER TO THEM THAT FEAR THEE, THAT IT MAY BE DISPLAYED BECAUSE OF THE TRUTH" (PSALMS 60:4).

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signal instances in point here are to be found in John 6:22-71; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 12:1-53; Luke 14:25-35. Christ sought after quality rather than quantity. He continually magnified the sterner side of discipleship and thus sloughed off the fickle multitudes. What a comparatively few of the great multitudes ever became actual disciples! A Billy Sunday would have had all of Palestine "hitting the sawdust trail." And many a Baptist preacher would have had multiplied thousands of professions to report. Judged by modern standards, Jesus was a colossal failure as an evangelist!

Baptist churches today are overwhelmed by the unregenerate principally because we, unlike Christ, have had an inordinate desire for numbers. It is right to have a passion for the lost. Jesus had it to an infinite degree. But it is a sad mistake to allow our zeal to make us try to take the place of the Holy Spirit in the saving of souls. For the most part this inordinate desire for numbers has

worn the cloak of a sincere and commendable, but misguided evangelistic zeal. Nevertheless it has been tragical in its results. It has brought Baptist churches to where most of them have about as little regard for a preacher that will declare the whole counsel of God as the Pharisees had for Christ. It has practically obliterated the line of demarcation between the church and the world. B. H. Hillard once said:

"The blighting curse has been, and still is, that Baptists have gone in a mad race for members until there are thousands swept into our churches with no more religion than a heathen Hottentot. This is no pessimistic 'whine,' but a tragic fact. Tell me that a saved man can have absolutely no concern for the cause of Christ? Tell me that a saved man will spend his entire earnings on himself and his and absolutely forget the cause of the Lord? Tell me that a saved man will desecrate the holy Sabbath day without the slightest restraint? Tell me that a saved man will habitually indulge in every form of worldly and sinful amusement—especially when his church stands against it? Tell me that a saved man will close his heart to the appeal of sin-cursed and dying humanity, in the face of the plain scriptural command—the last words of our Lord? I don't believe a word of it. Jesus said: **'By their fruits ye shall know them.'** That is enough. It tells a sad story. It will condemn men in hell unless the grace of God intervenes."

Estimates of the lost in our churches today range from fifty to seventy-five percent. Of course, no one knows the exact percent. But surely he is blind who cannot see that it must be represented so far as man can tell, by quite a large figure.

Whence came this uncircumcised throng? Did God add them to our churches? Nay, not so. God adds to the church only such as are saved. Then whence came they? We may trace their presence to at least two underlying causes:

1. *Forgetfulness that results belong to God.*

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6). It is not ours to be primarily concerned about results. Rather we should have all concern about being obedient servants of God and leave results wholly with him. Especially do we need to be warned in this connection in this day when the commercial world is stressing results as never before. Efficiency of production is the great end sought today in the commercial world. This is the spirit of the age in which we live, and that

spirit is as catching as smallpox. And a devout, open-minded study of the word is the only vaccine that will render us immune to it.

2. *Abuse of the protracted meeting and outside evangelism.*

These things are all right within themselves. It is their abuse that is to be avoided. The preaching of the word is always in place, and when a church feels led to have a special period of preaching either to the saved or lost or both, it surely has scriptural warrant and precedent for doing so. And if a church and pastor feel led to call in an outside man to do the preaching, then they have scriptural precedent in the going of Barnabas in Tarsus in search of Paul to bring him back to Antioch to preach there in a protracted meeting. The evil has come in the abuse of these scriptural things. The wise solution of the problem lies not in their abolition, but in ridding them of their evils. We have come to feel that we must have results during a protracted meeting. Commonly, if results in professions of faith do not begin to manifest themselves early in the meeting, then one expedient after another is used—"hot air," high pressure, radical emotionalism, long-winded invitations, with many clap-trap propositions, and much begging. If the meeting goes on to a close and there are no "professions," everybody usually feels that the meeting has been a failure. In such a case the evangelist is not likely to get much money out of the meeting. And if he has many such meetings, it is very likely to put a check in his evangelistic career. In these ways we have come unconsciously to adopt false and unscriptural methods in evangelism. Oh when will we learn that it is ours to preach the word publicly, privately, in season and out of season, and then leave results with God? This leads us naturally to the next characteristic of Jesus that we desire to notice, in connection with which we will notice other things that bring the lost into our churches.

II. HE DEPENDED WHOLLY UPON THE WORD OF GOD TO ACCOMPLISH RESULTS

Jesus used but one method in evangelism! That one method was the preaching of the word. There are many things that Christ did not depend on in His preaching to the lost. Let us note some of them:

1. *He did not depend upon personal magnetism or mass psychology.*

He had personal magnetism. And, no doubt, many were attracted to Him by it. But they soon got their "cup" full. And the fact that so many were thus attracted to Him explains why He did most of His severest preaching

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to the multitudes. He knew human nature, and He knew when the multitudes attended upon His ministry it was time to do some sifting. Therefore it was His custom to lay down His severest tests of discipleship in the presence of the multitudes. On one occasion Jesus said to a crowd of Jews: **"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you"** (John 6:53). He could not have uttered a more offensive thing to the Jews. Why, the very idea of them becoming cannibals, especially in view of their strict regulations concerning clean and unclean meats and the divine prohibition against partaking of blood! Of course Christ was speaking figuratively and spiritually (vs. 47), but they understood Him to be speaking literally on this occasion, as the fifty-second verse will show. And Christ took no special pains to explain His meaning to them. Thus He turned away from Him those who had been attracted to Him by His mere personal influence.

On another occasion when a multitude was following Him, Jesus said to them: **"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Mark 8:34). Thus He again applied the acid test. Again, on another similar occasion, He turned to the multitude and said: **"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"** (Luke 14:26). Then He exhorted them to sit down and count the cost.

The preacher should strive to live so that his life will not discount his words. And God may manifest the reality and veracity of His Word in the life of the preacher. But mere personal magnetism or influence has never had the least to do with making one true disciple of Christ. It has made many false ones, but not one true one. The truth upon which discipleship rests is of divine revelation (Matt. 16:17). The attraction is not to be in the preacher,

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but in the Christ he presents (John 12:32).

The following condemnation of a certain kind of mass psychology appeared in "Faith and Life," edited by Roy Mason, Tampa, Fla., (issue of May, 1934):

"In actual practice many a Baptist revival and evangelistic campaign would prove a complete 'flop' were it not that groups of children are psychologized into the church. Often when you learn that quite a large number of 'converts' have been made during a certain revival, when you make further inquiry you find that most of them are children and came from the Sunday school. Here is about what happened: On the second Sunday of the meeting, the Sunday school classes assembled for just a few moments, then all went into the auditorium where the preacher addressed the children (often 'sob stuff' is resorted to) and appealed to them to make a profession. With the appeal of the preacher; the influence of teachers urging them on; and the influence of mass child psychology, the poor children stand little chance. What happens? Some child starts the procession and the others follow and what a great service! (?) (?) Baptist churches have been, and are being further filled with unsaved people through this sort of thing."

And again, from the same article, we read: "It is highly dangerous to deal with a great group of children in such a way as to get them to move en masse. Any man who knows anything about child psychology can succeed in stampeding a bunch of children.

"The writer of these lines would not, for anything, let a visiting preacher or evangelist herd together his Sunday school children and take advantage of them in the way just suggested. When children are led to make a profession en masse it is generally true that most of them, know nothing of saving faith in Jesus Christ. One child leads; another follows. Why do we say these things? Because we have been baptizing people for years who were saved long after just such a childhood mistake. Just recently two persons have confessed in private conversation that they were taken into the church in childhood in just such a manner as indicated above. And for every one who learns of their mistake and is later really saved, there are doubtless many who never learn their mistake and who go on to hell.

"It is nothing less than a crime to deal with children as they are commonly dealt with in revival

meetings. 'Junior choirs,' and 'afternoon story hours' are, as a rule, nothing in the world but schemes and devices used to get children into the churches. Sometimes those resorting to such are doubtless sincere in thinking that they are doing the right thing, when the truth is they are helping to 'slaughter the children' spiritually."

2. *He did not depend upon mere human tact and diplomacy.*

Human tact and diplomacy would never have led Jesus into the temple to drive out the money changers, nor would He have been thus led to denounce the Pharisees as He did. Human tact and diplomacy would have led Him to avoid a break with the religious leaders of His day. If He had been a diplomat, He would have reasoned that He could accomplish more by staying on the inside of the religious society of His day and reforming it instead of violently breaking with it. This is the reasoning of some today with regard to corrupt churches and associations. But they are dead wrong. God has not commissioned us to go out and reform corrupt institutions. When a church or institute takes its stand against truth and righteousness, then God's command to every believer is "**Come out from among them, and be ye separate**" (II Cor. 6:17).

It is true that on some occasions Christ's conduct and approach may be conceived of as being tactful and diplomatic even from a human standpoint. But the fact that it was not always so shows that with Him it was not a question of what was tactful and diplomatic, but what was according to the Father's will. It should be the same with us. We should ever ask what God wants said and done, and not what is tactful and diplomatic. If the will of God is our criterion, we may on some occasions act tactfully and diplomatically, but on other occasions we will act oppositely.

3. *He did not depend upon high pressure and intense emotionalism.*

He sought no hasty decisions. Instead He exhorted the people to sit down and count the cost before deciding to become His disciples. See Luke 14:26-33. How many evangelists do that today? Instead most of them seek in every conceivable way to over-persuade. High pressure evangelism can be indicated not only on scriptural grounds, but also on sound psychological grounds. Charles S. Gardner, in his book on "Psychology and Preaching," has some valuable remarks in this connection. He says: "It is noticeable that those who rely upon suggestion as a method of influencing others insist upon immediate action, while those who

instinctly resist this kind of influence insist upon postponement of action, and it is a healthy instinct. The desire to postpone action may be, and often is, the result of moral inertia, or of a habit that has enfeebled the will, or a positive inclination in the wrong direction. This is so often the case that one hesitates to say anything to encourage the deferring of action in response to an appeal. But it is nevertheless true that, if the response is not one of thoughtful impulse, a mere nervous reaction under the power of suggestion, its ethical value is naught. [This is all most professions of faith today are—mere nervous reactions to the power of suggestion.—Author.] The only antidote to an enfeebled will is to stimulate to voluntary action, the rational control of conduct. And an immediate motor reaction induced merely by suggestion only adds to the enfeeblement of the will. . . . One is often thus precipitated into action which is subsequently deplored and can only with difficulty be reconsidered; or committed to a position from which he would gladly recede but cannot without self-stultification; and so goes on through life embarrassed and morally compromised by the consciousness of standing in false relations. This exactly describes the situation of thousands who today are enrolled as members of Christian churches; and while it enables the church to make a brave show as to numerical strength, it is one of the chief causes of the comparative lack of power of organized Christianity. I make bold to say that the disastrous results of this false psychological method are more general and more immediate in the realm of religion than anywhere else." Nearly all evangelism today embodies this false method. Is it any wonder our churches are in the condition they are in? And if this method can be indited on psychological grounds, how much more can it be indited on scriptural grounds.

4. *He did not depend upon salesmanship methods.*

One of the falsest notions that ever got hold of the mind of any one is that the preacher is to employ the methods of popular salesmanship. Popular salesmanship is based on the suggestion method which has been discussed already. Picture a salesman saying to a prospect: "Sit down and count the cost and see if you are able to buy the thing I am trying to sell you." In substance this is what Christ said to the multitude. Most salesmen would starve to death if they used this method.

Salesmanship methods in the ministry are responsible almost

altogether for the lost being in our churches. Joshua Gravett once said: "The Lord deliver us from artful men." Salesmen-preachers are the artful men from which we need deliverance.

5. *He did not tamper with the soul and try to help the Holy Spirit out.*

Neither did any other New Testament preacher. They all preached the word and left men and women face to face with it. Had many a present-day preacher been in Christ's place when Nicodemus came to him, he would have said: "Let's get down here and settle this matter on our knees." And then he would have artfully wrested a profession of faith out of Nicodemus by the "corkscrew method." Why didn't Christ do this? We ask again, why didn't he do it? And we wait for some user of this method to answer. Many a present-day preacher would have used the same method with the woman at the well of Jacob. And in preaching to the multitudes many a present-day preacher would have concluded with something like this: "Now all you people who want to be saved come forward for prayer." But Christ and the apostles never used that method. Again, we ask why? Were Christ and the apostles model preachers? Or did they leave out some very essential things?

The mourners' bench is not only unscriptural, it is anti-scriptural. It is as anti-scriptural as the Roman Catholic confessional. A Baptist preacher, in inviting sinners to come to him and others to be prayed for, is as blameworthy as the priest that sits at the confessional.

The mourners' bench is the best place in the world for working up fleshly emotion and deceiving sinners into making a profession of faith without being saved. It is wholly of the devil.

Moreover the custom of inviting sinners forward for prayer misplaces prayer. Acceptable prayer must be accompanied by faith, for "**How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed**" (Rom. 10:14). If the sinner can reach God other than through Christ, then the mediatorship of Christ is not a necessary thing, but only arbitrary. Christ said: "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**" (John 14:6). This being true, we know that every man who has ever reached God has done so through Christ. And to reach God through Christ means to reach him through faith in Christ. A sinner may go through the form of calling on God, but his prayer will never reach God until he puts his faith in Christ.

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Therefore the prime need of the sinner is not to be told to pray. He will do that without being told when his conviction has reached the proper point. What he needs is to be told how he can find acceptance with God.

Simon Magus was exhorted to pray, but not to come to a mourners' bench; nor was he exhorted to pray as a sinner. It is plain that while Peter believed Simon to be lost, yet he recognized a bare possibility that he might be saved and addressed these words to him on the basis of that possibility. Otherwise the expression, **"if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,"** is meaningless. Certainly God will forgive the sinner when he repents and believes on Christ, as a result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but if a sinner seeks to repent in the manner that a saved person repents, which is apart from the immediate experience of regeneration, he will not find the ability to do so nor will he find forgiveness with God, no matter how much he prays. So Peter proposed to Simon a test, by which he could detect his true standing before God.

A correct interpretation of this passage leaves not a single case where a New Testament preacher told a sinner to pray as such.

The publican prayed (Luke 18:13, 14), but it was not at a mourners' bench. His prayer was answered, but not without faith; else he was saved without faith.

Cornelius prayed and was heard (Acts 10:31); but not without faith. Cornelius had the same faith that all Old Testament saints had. This is evidenced by at least two facts: (1) *His giving of alms received divine approval* (Acts 10:4, 31). In commenting on v. 31, H. B. Hackett well says: "He is assured now of the approval of his acts; the acts were approved when he performed them" (An American Commentary on the New Testament). But **"the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD"** (Prov. 15:8). And **"they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Rom. 8:8). (2) *Peter's words* (Acts 10:34, 35) *distinctly imply that Cornelius was a worker of righteousness and was, as such, accepted of God.* The alm's-giving and other acts of Cornelius were either dead works from which he needed to repent, or they were works of faith. They were certainly not the former, for God does not accept dead works. But it has been said that Cornelius had not heard the gospel until Peter went down to him. Such a statement is due

to an oversight. In Acts 10:37 Peter states that Cornelius knew **"the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ."**

And even though he had not heard of Jesus of Nazareth, he still would have had the gospel of the Old Testament, the same gospel that all other Old Testament saints had. The faith that he had was that which looked forward to the promised Messiah.

Peter needed to go down to Caesarea to assure Cornelius that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. For, having come into the new dispensation, he needed to know this and to believe it, (for, while he had heard of Jesus, he yet was not assured that He was the Messiah, and as yet did not believe in Him as such.) in order to be saved in the full sense of the term. Cornelius was already saved in the sense that all Old Testament saints that came into the new dispensation were already saved. But Cornelius, like all other Old Testament saints that came into the new dispensation, needed to know Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, and to believe on Him as such. Their Old Testament faith was not sufficient after they had come into the new dispensation, especially after they had heard of Jesus, as was the case with Cornelius. This belief in the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah was necessary to their salvation in the temporal and ultimate sense of that term. For the temporal sense of salvation see Phil. 2:12; I Tim. 4:16. For the ultimate sense see Rom. 13:11; I Pet. 1:5. This explains Acts 11:14.

Cornelius needed to be saved from errors that existed in his mind because of a faith, which, from a New Testament standpoint, was immature. He needed to be made perfect **"as pertaining to the conscience"** (Heb. 9:9). This could not be accomplished by Old Testament faith, which looked through types and shadows. For this there was required a faith that fully beheld the incarnate Son of God as the promised Messiah. In this sense and through this mature New Testament faith the heart of Cornelius was cleansed after he heard the gospel from Peter. This explains Acts 15:9. With this faith there was also repentance from much that immature faith had not revealed. This explains Acts 11:18.

After Cornelius exercised this mature New Testament faith, he received the Holy Spirit as others who were already saved had received Him on the day of Pentecost. This marked the pouring out of the Spirit on the Gentiles, but in no wise indicates that Cornelius was just a lost sinner until

Peter went down and preached to him. No saint during the Old Testament dispensation received the baptism of the Spirit, nor even the continuous abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Full New Testament faith was a prerequisite to both of these, and they are not the same.

If it be said that Cornelius was an idolator, because he fell down to worship Peter; then it may be said also that the Apostle John was still an idolator while he was receiving revelations on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9).

6. *He was not a sensationalist.*

He never sought to make a sensation of His work of healing nor of His other miraculous acts. He charged the ones that were healed that they tell no man of it. He never advertised Himself, nor did He encourage others to advertise Him.

And we have a death-blow to sensationalism in His story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man reasoned that his brother would repent if Lazarus would go back and preach to them. But Jesus solemnly reminded him that his brothers had Moses and the prophets, and that, if they would not hear them, they would not repent even though one should rise from the dead. Think of what crowds Lazarus could have had to hear him! His renown would have spread like wild-fire. People would have run over each other in an effort to hear him. Every where it would have been shouted: "There is a preacher holding a meeting in town that died and rose again. He is telling what he experienced while dead and in Abraham's bosom. He has seen hell and those in it." The largest meeting places would not have held the people who would have thronged to hear. But Jesus said that none would have repented at his preaching that would reject the calm message of Moses and the prophets! What a death-blow to sensationalism!

III. HE DID NOT TRY TO PREACH SO AS TO PLEASE THE PEOPLE

And He didn't please all of them. He didn't even please a majority of them. Neither will any other preacher that is faithful in his calling. Christ reproved and rebuked. So will every other preacher that fulfills the charge that has been given him. See II Tim. 4:2. Not only did Christ rebuke, but sometimes He rebuked sharply. The preacher of today is commanded to do the same when need arises. See Titus 1:13. Christ had the hatred of the world—even the religious world. He said all His disciples would have it too. See John 15:18-20. Jesus said He came to send strife and division. See Matt. 10:34-36 and Luke 12:50-

53. These will accompany the ministry today of those preachers who withheld none of the counsel of God. The popular cry is for the preacher who can unite churches. But God has not called preachers to hold the saved and lost together in churches. Only a compromising ministry will unite the vast majority of churches today in their present condition. They are sadly in need of division to the breaking point between the saved and lost in them. They need the old leaven purged out of them. I Cor. 5:7.

The vast majority of Baptist churches today do not want a faithful ministry. They want a soft-peddler, a pussy-footer, a compromiser, a diplomat, a smooth-tongued spouter who knows how to eschew the most objectionable things and season and sugar coat the rest so that they will be palatable to the perverted and worldly taste. The cry from the modern pew is the same as of old—**"Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits"** (Isa. 30:10). But God's command is: **"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression"** (Isa. 58:1).

Some time ago the British Weekly brought an indictment against the clergy of the Church of England, in which it said that their sermons never "sting and stab" and that they deal with "blurred uncertainties, foggy ambiguities and clumsy evasions." This is more or less true of much preaching in Baptist pulpits. This is the kind of preaching, and the only kind, that will keep things in harmony and the machinery well oiled in the vast majority of Baptist churches today. Christ's preaching was not of that kind. It evoked much and bitter opposition and drove the sword of the spirit into the hearts of sinful men. It caused a stir of division.

IV. HIS SPIRIT ADJUSTED ITSELF TO THE ATTITUDE AND NEEDS OF HIS HEARERS

With the adulterous woman He was very gentle, but with the Pharisees He was sharp. This is God's method (Psa. 18:25, 26).

The preacher, in general spirit, needs to be gentle (II Tim. 2:24, 25). But, on the other hand, there is a place for sharp public rebuke (Titus 1:13; I Tim. 5:20). If gentleness will bring people to the truth, then use gentleness. If it requires severity to turn men from all sin and error, then use that. Follow the Spirit, and He will show what is needed.

V. HE SPOKE WITH POSITIVENESS

He didn't deal with "blurred

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Some Characteristics

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uncertainties, foggy ambiguities and clumsy evasions." He spoke with authority. The preacher today may speak with authority because he has an authoritative book to speak from. Positive preaching is not popular today, but it is scriptural. The preacher who has no convictions that are strong enough to cause him to speak with positiveness needs to acquaint himself with the Book. To be certain, no man can rightfully speak with the finality and positiveness of Christ, but a man of the Book will be able to speak with a large degree of positiveness.

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preacher pray for more preachers to enter the harvest. It is a poor church that does not produce preachers, a sign of spiritual vitality. It is interesting to study the words used in the New Testament to describe the kind of men that Jesus calls into the harvest fields. Each word presents a different angle for the picture of the same man and his work.

1. Learners (*math'tai*).

We are used to the Latin word "disciple," from *disco*, to learn. That is precisely what the Greek word *math'tis* means, a learner. Originally the word was used of any and all who took Jesus as Teacher. It was at first a very small group of half a dozen (Andrew and Peter, James and John, Philip and Nathanael), as we see them in the early chapters of John's Gospel (2:11, 12, 22; 4:8, 27, 32), at Bethany beyond Jordan, Cana in Galilee, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Sychar in Samaria. These were simple learners who afterwards went back to their tasks in Galilee. Four of them (Andrew and Simon, James and John) were called to become fishers of men, and left their business to follow Jesus all the time. The term "disciple" came to be applied to all the followers of Jesus, as in John 6:66; Luke 6:13 (our text); and Luke 6:17, "a great multitude of his disciples." In the Acts "the disciples" are those who confess Jesus as the Messiah or the Saviour, a great number of Jerusalem (Acts 6:7). But in the Gospels the word is often used for the twelve men chosen from among the multitude of disciples, "his twelve disciples" (Matt. 10:1). This limited use of the term, for the men chosen after a night of prayer, does not alter the real meaning. They were to be learners. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me" (Matt. 11:29). This command is given to all

who are willing to learn from Jesus, but it concerns preachers in particular. They are expected to have expert knowledge of Jesus and to be able to teach others what they have themselves learned. The preacher who does not keep on learning will die of dry rot. The dead line in the ministry is reached the day that a man stops learning. The true disciple keeps an open mind to God in Christ, to God's Word, and to God's world. He is always growing in grace and in knowledge. Such a preacher is richer and more powerful the older he grows.

2. Workers (*ergatai*).

The translation "labourers" is a Latin word, but the Greek word is from *ergon* (work). The Anglo-Saxon word "worker" is better. The preacher is to be a worker, not an idler, not a critic. The ripe harvest calls for reapers who are willing and able to put in the scythe and harvest the grain before it is too late. There is never an over-supply of workers in this harvest of the world. There may be too many in a given spot, but there are thousands in every city who are not reached by our organized Christian machinery. This is not a criticism of the churches nor of the preachers, unless they are guilty of neglect. In the first century every Christian was a worker. When the disciples were driven by persecution out of Jerusalem, they scattered the message of the Gospel as they fled. It is necessary to have pastors of churches who are paid salaries, but we need today a new enlistment of the multitude of the disciples as workers, who will carry the story of Jesus to every home in the world. John Wesley and Charles Spurgeon made large use of lay preachers, men who kept their business tasks and on Sunday went into the villages and slums to preach Christ. The city church today grows where its members are like a hive of bees. The workers go out after the honey and fill the hives, not the shirkers or the jerkers. May God hurl forth workers into the harvest, men and women who have learned the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. Missionaries (*apostoloi*).

The Greek word apostle we largely confine to the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. They did form a special group, to which no one was ever added save Matthias, to take the place of the traitor Judas. Paul was an apostle on a par with the twelve, but not one of the number. So also, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, James the brother of Jesus, were all apostles in a real sense, as men sent of God. Our word missionary is simply one sent. Jesus Christ is God's Apostle or Missionary to earth (John 17:3; Heb.

3:1). The original meaning of messenger or missionary appears in II Cor. 8:23, where the agents appointed by the churches to help Paul in the collection are called "apostles (messengers), of the churches." John the Baptist is aptly described in John 1:6 as "a man sent from God." So he was, and so are we. God sends us, but not all go when God sends. Some, to be sure, may go whom God did not send. In a true sense, all the workers and learners are sent into the harvest by God. Some, alas, tarry till the eleventh hour. Some pass their responsibility on to the preachers and to the missionaries. The true preacher is a missionary, whether he stays at home or goes to a foreign land. One thing is certain: If all the pastors at home were real missionaries, there would be no lack of support of the work abroad. There are too many hardshells in the pulpit and certainly too many in the pew.

4. Heralds (*k'rukēs*).

The substantive *k'rukēs* means a herald vested with public authority, who carried the official messages of kings, governors, or military commanders. Paul so conceives of himself as a herald or preacher of Christ (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11). He held this to be an honour like being an ambassador (*presbeuM'*) for Christ (II Cor. 5:20), equipped with Christ's authority to offer men the terms of reconciliation and peace with God. The verb *k'rukēsM'*, to act as herald, to proclaim, is common in the Gospels of the preaching of the Baptist (Matt. 3:1), and of Jesus, who "went about in all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 9:35). Jesus uses this very word to the apostles: "As ye go, preach" (Matt. 10:7). Hence ministers are called "preachers," even if they preach poorly. It is a noble conception of the minister as the herald of salvation to men, and calls for men of character and force. The true preacher of Christ holds the highest position on earth, as the spokesman of Jesus Christ. Paul proclaimed repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus in public address and in private visits from house to house (Acts 20:20). He was always a preacher and not just while in the pulpit. That was his throne, but he could preach anywhere, whether in a Jewish synagogue, a teacher's classroom, a private home, by the river-side, in a classic courtroom, before Roman governors, facing a mob that clamoured for his life, with a chain on his right hand, in a prison or a palace.

5. Teachers (*didaskaloi*).

Jesus Himself is the great Teacher of the ages, and He rejoiced in being

considered Teacher and Lord (John 13:13). The word "rabbi" is rendered by *didaskalos* in Greek (John 1:38). Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a teacher come from God (3:10). The publicans called the Baptist "teacher" (Luke 3:12). Paul conceived himself to be "a teacher of the Gentiles" as well as "a herald and apostle." The same man is pictured as teacher who is learner, worker, missionary, apostle. This is an essential aspect of the preacher's task. He must know his message and be able to impart it. Not all men are "apt to teach," though Paul lists this quality in the prerequisites for the preacher. Some indeed are more gifted in teaching than others. Paul mentions "teachers" as a special group of those with the gifts of the Spirit (Eph. 4:11). In the early days in America (Sprague's *Annals of American Ministers*) there would often be two sermons, one the exposition of the text, and the other the exhortation based on it. Now the same man has to do both, and all within a half hour. But the exhortation goes down better if it rests on some solid exposition.

6. Prophets (*proph'tai*).

The prophet is one who speaks forth a message, and in particular, a message from God. He is God's spokesman, as Aaron was Moses' prophet (Ex. 7:1). The message of God was by no means always about the future, but more commonly concerning present duty. There was always the sense of urgency. There was a long line of noble prophets in the Old Testament times, which reached its climax in the Baptist, who was more than a prophet. The people took Jesus to be the prophet who was to come into the world (John 6:11), and so He was, though very much more. There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). The prophet is in touch with God, and has the courage to declare God's will whether men like it or not. Every preacher of Christ today is a prophet, if he is true to his Master and dares to proclaim the whole message of God to his generation. Such courage often resulted in the death of the prophet, who was loyal to his convictions and to his God. But the prophetic note is needed today. The time-serving preacher is a coward, while the prophet is a hero for truth.

7. Evangelists (*euaggelistai*).

In a word, gospelizers, for gospel is *euaggelion*. The gospelizer is one who knows the gospel of God, the good news of salvation, and tells it to the audience or to the individual; who knows how to win men to Christ. The verb *euaggelizomai* is used of the Baptist (Luke 3:18) and of Jesus, "preaching

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and evangelizing the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Philip is called an evangelist (Acts 21:8), and Paul exhorted Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5). It is a pity to see a preacher who can preach a great sermon and yet is unable to tell a soul how to trust Christ and be saved. The best type of preacher is a pastor-evangelist, who knows how to clinch the sermon with the personal application to the individual. The good fisherman lands his fish. He knows how to draw the net. Some men possess this gift more than others, as Paul noted (I Cor. 12:9; Eph. 4:11). But no preacher should be helpless with one who longs to see Jesus. There is a prejudice against some professional evangelists with tricks of manner and method, but evangelism is the first step in all Christian work. First catch your man for Christ.

8. Pastors, Shepherds (*poimenes*).

Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). He has the shepherd heart and yearns for the sheep without a shepherd, and for the one lost sheep on the mountainside. In Hebrews 13:20, Jesus is called "**the Great Shepherd of the sheep.**" Peter speaks of Him as "**the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls**" (I Pet. 2:25), and "**the Chief Shepherd**" (5:4). By the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said to Peter: "**Shepherd my lambs**" (John 21:16), "**Feed my lambs**" (21:15, 17). Paul exhorts the elders (bishops) of Ephesus at Miletus "**to shepherd the church of God**" (Acts 20:28). And in Ephesians 4:11 he lists shepherds as one of the groups of workers for God along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers. Here again every pastor (Latin for shepherd) is by his very office a shepherd. Some, to be sure, are better shepherds than others. Not long ago, when I preached at a large church, the pastor called attention to an item in the church bulletin stating the fact that two hundred and forty names had been dropped from the roll of over three thousand. Here was not one lost sheep, but a huge flock of two hundred and forty that had wandered away from the fold.

9. Elders (*presbuteroi*).

The word means simply an older man, but it soon came to be applied to officers of a town, like our alderman, and the Jews used it for the rulers of the synagogue and for one form of membership in the Sanhedrin. The earliest use of the word in the New Testament for ministers of Christ is in Acts 11:30, in Jerusalem. They

are separate from the apostles (15:2, 22, etc.) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). This use has nothing to do with age, but only with office. There is a natural presumption that one increases in wisdom with age, though it is not always true. Japan used to depend much on the guidance of the Elder Statesmen. Youth has a right to look to age for wisdom. James, the half-brother of Jesus, came to be the leading elder in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 21:18), because of his character and gifts and because the apostles were usually away on preaching tours. Each church in the large cities apparently had several elders, as in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18), Ephesus (20:17), Philippi (Phil. 1:1). This situation probably did not apply to "**the church in the house**" arrangement, as in the case of Priscilla and Aquila in Rome (Rom. 16:5). Today some ministers insist on using "Elder" before their names instead of Reverend (a non-scriptural term).

10. Bishops (*episcopai*).

The word means overseer, one who looks over (not overlooks) the concerns of the church of which he is pastor. Peter calls Christ the Bishop of our souls (I Pet. 2:25). The same men are called both elders and bishops in Acts 20:17, 28 and Titus 1:5, 7. The usage in the Epistle of Ignatius (early second century), and common today, of bishop over the elders, does not occur in the New Testament. The apostles did possess leadership over all the churches, but they had no successors in the nature of the case, for personal witnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ came to a natural end (Acts 1:22). There is no rank in the New Testament ministry except that of the apostles. The same men are termed disciples, workers, heralds, teachers, prophets, pastors, elders, bishops. There are diversities of gifts among them, as among the apostles themselves, and so some, like James in Jerusalem, naturally forged ahead into leadership. Paul left Titus in Crete, and Timothy in Ephesus, in charge of the work as superintendents or secretaries of the mission work, a step towards episcopacy, and yet not going beyond the essential New Testament democracy.

11. Ministers (*diakonoi*).

This word *diakonos* occurs technically for deacon in Philippians 1:1 and I Timothy 3:8-13; but it is more frequently applied to preachers as ministers of Christ. In itself it is simply any one who serves with diligence (raises a dust by hastening), whether his master be householder (John 2:5, 9), king (Matt. 22:13), or God (Rom. 13:4). Paul rejoiced to call himself a minister of the gospel (Col.

1:23), and of the church (1:25), and in particular of Christ (II Cor. 11:23). Jesus used the verb (*diakoneM*, to serve) of Himself, as expressing His conception of His own mission (Matt. 20:28). "**Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant**" (*diakonos*, Matt. 20:26). That is Christ's idea of true greatness, great service to others in Christ's name. The greatest preacher in Christ's view may be one of whom we have never heard, one who served best in the place where he laboured. There are other words somewhat parallel to *diakonos* like *hup`ret's* (under-rower), used of Mark (Acts 13:5), and *halieus* (fisherman), used of the four by the Sea of Galilee, who were to become fishers of men (Mark 1:17)

12. Witnesses (*martures*).

Our English word "martyr" is this very word, one who witnesses with his death, like Stephen. Jesus expressly charged the disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, the coming of the Holy Spirit in power (Luke 24:48 f.; Acts 1:8). Then, "**ye shall be my witnesses.**" Now a witness can only testify in court what he knows himself, not what he has heard someone else say. It would have been a tragedy if the disciples, before they were clothed with power from on high, had gone forth to take the world for Christ. The Holy Spirit enabled them to understand the things of Christ. They already had faith and hope, but now they gained insight and power. Hence Peter boldly said: "**This Jesus did God raise from the dead, of whom we all are witnesses**" (Acts 2:32). When arraigned before the Sanhedrin, Peter and John bravely defied this Jewish court: "**We are not able not to go on speaking the things which we saw and heard**" (4:20). Such witnesses are irresistible. It is pitiful to hear a preacher talk about Christ without personal knowledge of Him as Saviour. Such a preacher is powerless, however gifted he may be, and whatever degrees he may have. Instance Spurgeon and Moody, as men who were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Chalmers says that he preached twelve years before he was converted. After that he became Scotland's greatest preacher of Christ.

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into the discard!

I do not well see how one can carefully investigate and ponder over the tendencies of the day in which we are living and not have his optimism drop until it finally oozes out at the

tips of his toes. I believe that this present age has been very aptly and truly termed the "Jazz Age." Now, I realize that it is easy enough to condemn anything and to find fault, but it is not in any grouchy mood that I undertake to set forth the failings of the generation of the present. I am sure that I am not guilty of viewing the world through the eyes of a dyspeptic, or of taking my observations through smoked glasses. I never try to close my eyes to everything good and aim at seeing only the evil. I aim to see conditions as they really exist, and I must confess that I feel blue sometimes when I view present-day tendencies and conditions. For one to say that this is the best age and the best world that we have ever lived in doesn't solve any of the problems, or keep one from wanting to see the conditions remedied.

Still, as I look about me and see the condition of things in general, it is not as if I expected the whole world to conform to righteousness. That is too much to expect so long as the devil is loose. I don't expect the whole world to be converted. If I did I would feel terribly depressed sometimes over the slow progress of Christianity. The Bible leads us to expect that comparatively few will be saved. I look on this world as I would a shipwrecked vessel doomed to sink. The main concern ought to be to get as many as possible off of the doomed ship before it goes under. So with this sin-doomed world we ought to try to rescue as many as possible out of its peril. My aim in writing on this subject is to try to warn Christians of the perilous times in which we are living, and to urge them not to join in sin's high carnival that is being carried on by the world. While sin will remain in the world until Jesus comes again, Christian people ought to exercise a sobering and a restraining influence on the world about them. It is the Christian's duty to stand out clear and distinct from the world, to witness against and to reprove the world by his life. For the Christian to join in the jazz and the godless hullabaloo of the irreverent about him, for him to go the same pace, with the same cry of "On with the dance!" is for him to lose his identity as a Christian. "**Among whom ye shine as lights in the present age,**" said Paul in writing to Christians. That is our business—to shine! The world's dense darkness of sin would have no ray of light to pierce its thick gloom, were it not for the shining of a Christian here and there. There was much sin and heathen godlessness in Paul's day. Ephesus, where he stayed for a while,

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was unspeakably sinful. In the great temple of Diana at that place, the most unthinkable immorality went on in the name of religion. At Rome, where Paul was imprisoned, there were the gladiatorial contests, where thousands witnessed the killing of men, and where later Christians were fed to the lions. At Corinth immorality and vice flourished. Yet amid these conditions Christians succeeded in living lives of purity. When they became Christians, they kept themselves free from these things.

Yes, the world was sinful in Paul's day. The fact that it is still corrupt would not discourage so much were it not for the fact that the world's corruption contaminates the church. There has come to be a laxity among Christians—a conforming to the age. **“Be ye not conformed to this age,”** says the Bible, **“but be ye transformed.”** There is a tendency on the part of all of us to imitate others. This tendency leads many Christians to adopt ways of doing and ways of dressing that are neither right nor Christian. They do these things just because others do them. We ought none of us to let our desire to “be in style” or in fashion—our desire to conform to custom—grow stronger or dominate our lives more than our religion. There is danger that this jazz age will influence churches until they will depart from things high and holy and become as light, senseless and frivolous as the outside world.

I desire to point out some of the harmful effects that the jazz spirit has wrought in the life of the present day. But before I do this, I might indicate more specifically what I mean by the word “jazz.”

The term jazz was originally applied to a certain aggregation of discordant sounds, called by some, music. This jazz “music” was copied, so I am told, from the tom-tom bands of the savages of central Africa. But the term jazz has been extended, and made to apply to many things. It indicates all that is light, fickle, noisome and discordant. It indicates that from which intelligence and the finer instincts and sensibilities have been extracted. In short, it indicates a reversion to the barbaric, in which the primitive and baser instincts are given free rein. The world has gone jazz crazy. The commercial age in which we live, and in which folks live in a constant rush, taking no time to think, furnishes an ideal condition for the development of the jazz spirit. Let us consider the effects of the growth of the jazz spirit on the world:

First, AESTHETICALLY. By this I mean jazz as it affects the aesthetic senses—those that generally sense the beautiful and the artistic. The rise of nations has been marked by the development in their peoples of artistic tastes and standards of beauty. For instance, as an illustration of the difference between the tastes of the savage and the highly cultured civilized man, I read some time ago of a certain primitive tribe that had been discovered on an island of the South Pacific. Their only music was produced by beating on a log with a pole. Many of the tribes in Africa, somewhat more highly developed, have what is termed “tom-tom” bands, in which a collection of primitive instruments are beaten and blown without regard to either rhythm or harmony. To the savage, lacking in aesthetic appreciation, this jumble of sounds seems highly musical. Hence I say the present-day return to music resembling this, and patterned after savages is an indication of a lowering of the standards of civilization and culture.

In the past we have had some great musicians—men whose masterpieces had the power to thrill the soul and stir the tender emotions. These masterpieces are generally laid aside today. Only a very few, comparatively speaking, are acquainted with them. The public does not want to hear them. They are too heavy for this frothy age. They might cause one to think, and many people of today do not want to think. They want some sort of hilarious stuff that will drown out thought. Have you ever noticed the kind of music that is played around disreputable places, and “joints” of ill repute? It is always that jazzy stuff. Real music—music that stirs the finer emotions, would be out of place there. It would be out of harmony with the sinful atmosphere of the place. There is something uplifting and ennobling in good music. A man or woman of vicious, depraved nature has a distaste for music of this kind. It is a reproof and a rebuke to them. They want something “quick and devilish,” as I heard one man express it. It is certainly not complimentary to our age to say that it is the music that finds favor in the dive and joint that has become the popular music of our day, but an investigation of the music collections on half the pianos will reveal that this is true. And, moreover, investigation will reveal that many of the popular songs and their titles are of such a suggestive nature as to be unfit to mention in a public gathering.

In the second place, let us consider the effect of the jazz spirit on the world INTELLECTUALLY. I don't believe

that there has ever been a shallower age intellectually than the present—an age when men really thought less than they do today. Printing presses are literally groaning under the burden of printed matter that is being turned out, but what class does much of it belong to? The most of the reading matter of today is of the very lightest, trashiest imaginable—something that can be assimilated without any mental effort whatsoever. For every pound of real substantial mental food put off the press, I dare say that there is a ton of trash. The difference between most reading matter today and the kind that furnishes food for thought is equal to the difference between a good juicy beefsteak and a saucer of corn flakes. There is as much puffing and flaking of literature today as of foods. You can take in a lot of it and still be empty. The great masterpieces of literature are being neglected. There is more reading of the motion picture magazines, “Breezy Tales,” “Zippy Stories,” etc., than there is of Shakespeare, Milton and a half-dozen other great authors. It seems to me that the popular magazines become rottener every year. Some of them, which a number of years ago published pretty clean stories today are filled with sex stories of a kind that should be prohibited by law. Why is this? Is it that the publishers are vicious men? No, they are in the publishing business for the money that they can get out of it. They publish this rotten stuff because a jazz-crazed public demands it.

Another indication of the intellectual trend of the times is the *curricula of our schools*, especially colleges and universities. The courses offered now are, in the main, vocational and utilitarian rather than cultural. The fitting of a man to live is deemed less important than the fitting of a man to make a living. Many of the courses that require real mental effort to pass are being supplanted by courses of a lighter nature. Educational ideals are rapidly changing, and I do not believe that it is unwarranted pessimism that prompts me to say that I consider many of the changes for the worse. The idea of educating a boy now in order to make a man out of him—a

man of character and right purposes; the idea that education is something primarily to enhance one's appreciation of the finer things of life, and to enable one to live a richer, fuller life, is rapidly passing away. In its stead is growing up the idea that schooling is simply for the purpose of increasing one's earning capacity. Education is reduced to a dollar-cents basis.

Yet another indication of the jazzed intellectual condition is the *type of amusements* most largely indulged in today. Among these, I suppose that the *movies* hold first place. It used to be that a large share of amusement was in the form of drama, tragedy and comedy, presented on what is generally termed the legitimate stage. These productions usually furnished some mental exercise to those that attended them. But this has become too thought-provoking for a jazzed public. The movies have practically put the so-called legitimate stage out of existence. People want the maximum amusement with the minimum of mental effort, and the movies furnish it. One can sit and absorb the average motion picture without ever being troubled with the necessity of thinking. As in literature, the public gets what it demands. Seldom does one see a film that has not something portraying crime or that does not deal with the unfaithfulness to wife of husband, or of husband to wife. The lurid, the sensational, and the unreal are constantly kept before the public. The prime idea of filmdom is to furnish a thrill, no matter what it takes to do it. It is impossible to calculate the effect and influence, mentally and otherwise, of the movie of today on the generation now growing up. More children, more young people, not to say people of mature years, are acquiring their ideals and mental makeup from the movies than from anywhere else. It is no wonder that we live in a jazz age, and with this kind of education going on, the prospect is that the world will get jazzier and jazzier. Christian people, I appeal to you not to allow your children to acquire their education at a moving picture theatre! Don't feed on the

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Berea Baptist Broadcast

STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
WFTA, Tupelo, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	101.9	3,000 FM
WLZA, Starkville, MS	Sunday 1:00 - 1:30 p.m.	710	2,500 AM
WCNA, Myrtle, MS	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	95.9	3,000 FM
WCTT, Corbin, KY	Sunday 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	680	5,000 AM
KARI, Blaine, WA	Saturday 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	550	5,000 AM
KORE, Springfield, OR	Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	1050	5,000 AM
DXRA, Davao City, Philippines	Sunday 8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	783 Khz...	10,000 AM
DWSS, Manila, Philippines	Sunday 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	1494	16,000 AM

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morbid and the sensational until you have acquired an insatiable appetite for such things!

It is this state of intellectual depravity about which I have been writing that makes the bible an unread book to many today, and consequently makes it difficult to reach people from the pulpit. The Bible is a thought-provoking book. It requires mental concentration if one is to understand it. It does not yield up its deep wisdom to the scatterbrained who bestow upon it only a few idle moments. This jazzy age of hurry, fuss and confusion makes for a thoughtless race of people and it is hard to reach thoughtless people with the gospel. I don't believe that any person can give thirty minutes to the serious consideration of his soul's future destiny and not decide to become a Christian. It is the part of a thinking person to look into the future. Preaching is designed to cause folks to thoughtfully consider the mighty fact of God, the soul, and eternity. Yet so thoughtless is this age that there is little time spent considering these things. The attitude of the many seems to be, "Let us whoop'er up now. The future can go hang! What do we care for the future? Let us have our fill of enjoyment. Don't think of the future, it kills one's pleasure—turn on the jazz—let's go!" And on they go, bound for hell in droves.

But next let us consider *the effect of the jazz spirit on the world MORALLY*. This is pre-eminently the jazz age in morals. We are living in a day of low moral standards. Indecencies that would have shocked and horrified our forefathers cause only the mildest comment today. The newspapers scoff at our Puritan ancestors with their so-called "blue laws" and stern moral exactions, but no one can deny that some of the finest men and women that America has produced have come from this same Puritan stock that is derided so much today. No older than I am, I can see that morals have dropped within the period of my own remembrance. Moreover, they have dropped during the past few years. Since the World War the godlessness and immorality of our people has been such as to appall the thinking minds of the nation. And especially is it true that there are low moral standards among young people. The relations between men and women have become loose and careless during the past few years. Say all you please about women's "rights" and about women having come into

a "new freedom," but no one can reasonably dispute the fact that this has brought about a lack of chivalry on the part of men. It has induced a familiarity that makes for immorality and the breaking down of the standards of modesty and womanly reserve. The "flapper" is a product of this age of jazz morals, and when I think of this caricature of womanhood, I think, "God pity the children of the next generation!"

You don't have to look very far today to see things that would not have been tolerated for one moment back in the days of our fathers. It is the commonest thing nowadays to see men and women in bathing together clad in the very scantiest attire that the law will permit—a thing that ought to strain the modesty of any pure-minded person to the breaking point. This is but one of the indications of the moral looseness and laxity of our day. No need to tell me that the person that protests against this sort of thing is depraved in mind, for I know, and any person who reads and observes knows that to pass the bounds of modesty and become careless about one's person is to promote immorality.

And away down at the bottom of the loose morals of our young people is *laxity on the part of parents*. Some fathers and mothers never make their children know the meaning of the word *obedience*. If son or daughter wants to go somewhere that they shouldn't go, the parents haven't the moral backbone to say *no* and to enforce it. It is considered a terrible thing by some people for one to be strict on their children, but I for one, would far rather be strict on a boy or girl of mine, than for them to start to hell from my own front door. Many times young people are not aware of their danger, and it is the duty of father and mother to safeguard their boy or girl until they get old enough to know the snares and pitfalls of life, and to avoid them. This is the jazz age in morals, and about *nine-tenths of the blame for it ought to be laid at the door of foolish mothers and fathers who let their boys and girls go anywhere and do anything that they may feel inclined to do*.

Finally, *consider with me, the effect of the jazz spirit on the world RELIGIOUSLY*. Jazz has created an unfavorable atmosphere for true religion. The church has suffered from this spirit. If a church will compromise and will become just as jazzy as the jazziest, it can fill its building to capacity. But no one will really have any respect for it. Many churches have been practically given over to amusements during the last few years. I remember passing a certain church in Louisville, Ky., one night, and I saw a *big dance in progress right in the church,*

while the latest jazz music rendered the night hideous with its discord. While I was pastor in Oklahoma I knew several churches to introduce motion pictures to take the place of the regular Sunday evening services. In this way they got together a large crowd all right, but what did it amount to? Folks were no better when they went away than when they came. There are preachers today who will resort to all sorts of schemes in order to please men and to be popular. They avoid telling people of their sins, because many do not want to be told of their sins. Such preachers substitute entertainment for the gospel. They give people what they, in their worldliness, crave, and not what they, in their sinfulness, really need. A preacher of that sort is a traitor to the God whom he professes to represent, and the blood of lost men and women will be upon his head. What this world needs is the gospel, and the call of God to a higher life. If the preachers and the churches fail in their duty, who will supply this need?

In view of the world's condition along all the lines mentioned above, if there was ever a time when the people of God had need to stand for the old gospel and the old Book, that time is certainly now. We ought to bear witness to this jazz-crazed, giddy, pleasure loving, sensuous and sensual age that its devotees are headed for hell, unless they repent and be converted. Our cry of today ought to be that of the apostle Peter, when on Pentecost he cried, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

Let every follower of Christ so conduct himself as to exercise a steady and restraining influence upon the world about him. Let none of us be guilty of jazzing into the melee and confusion, for by so doing we shall aid in the destroying of human souls. Let us live as a "**peculiar people**" a life of separation from the world, seeking all the while to rescue from the maelstrom of this world's folly, those who will hear and will heed the call to salvation, remembering that God's call is for us not to be "**conformed to this age.**"

Exaltation of Stephen

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(Acts 6:8). He was full of wisdom and disputed with the doctors in the synagogue (Acts 6:9). He prevailed so much that "**They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake**" (Acts 8:10).

I imagine as he was there in the synagogue; Pharisees put forward their very best controverters to make their case against Stephen. I imagine

Saul of Tarsus may have been one of those disputing with Stephen. The Pharisees were very good in ordering their arguments, but were not able to overcome Stephen. The longer they tried to argue, the worse they looked, and Stephen was winning the day.

The Pharisees could not prevail through argument, so they took Stephen with force and set him before the Sanhedrin. Then he was accused by false witnesses. "**Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God**" (Acts 6:11). They hired some false witnesses to appear and give perjured testimony against Stephen. This sounds very much like what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ in his trial before this very same Sanhedrin council. The Pharisees "**set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us**" (Acts 6:13-14). They were charging him with blaspheming the Temple and blaspheming the law of Moses. These were really the same charges the Lord faced.

Notice that they put blaspheming against Moses first, and then blaspheming against God. The order in verse 11 shows us something of the attitude of the Pharisees. They were more upset that he was, according to the false testimony, blaspheming the law and traditions of Moses than that he was blaspheming against God. These were very serious charges and were punishable by stoning to death.

All eyes were fixed on Stephen. The council was probably frowning down upon him and a large multitude is gathered around, because these are very serious charges. At this time, Gamaliel does not intervene. Earlier, when the Apostle Peter and John were accused and brought before the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel spoke up to their defense and spoke a word of wisdom, stopping them from doing any worse than what they did. Gamaliel does not intervene or give any support for Stephen. Neither does any of the other disciples speak up that we have any record of. I wonder if they were even there.

As all eyes are fixed on him, something very amazing happens. "**And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel**" (Acts 6:15). I understand from the construction here, that there was a visible radiancy on Stephen's face that

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Exaltation of Stephen

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was perceptible to the eye. At that moment, their attention was captured. I imagine that a silence stilled the crowd. The high priest breaks the spell, speaking up and gets back to the matter at hand. **“Then said the high priest, Are these things so?”** (Acts 7:1) He is pressing Stephen for an answer. Stephen had not given an answer. Following the question in the seventh chapter, Stephen begins to preach. His is one of the longest sermons recorded in the Word and also one of the best. His sermon was ground breaking among this crowd, much like Christ’s sermon at the well, recorded in John chapter four. Stephen was a trailblazer and it would not be until later that Peter and the others would pick up this message.

On the last day of Stephen’s life he was exalted. God was glorified in Stephen. All that looked on him saw this glory, but I suspect that Stephen was not conscious of it, as Moses was not when he came down from the mount.

I. Firstly, what is this exaltation or glory? He had the face as it was the face of an angel. The Bible records different appearances of angels and often notes that they are clothed in white apparel, which indicates there is a radiancy or light about them. I believe that is the case with the angles that appeared when the Lord ascended. Stephen’s face was shining like this. It was a noticeable brightness perceptible to the eye.

There are at least two other occurrences where mens faces shone visibly. One is when Moses came down from the mountain and his face was shining. Paul writes of this event saying, **“the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance which glory was to be done away”** (II Cor. 3:7). We know that the glory of Moses did fade but it was so bright that for a time Moses **“put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished”** (II Cor. 3:13). Moses put a veil over his face because it was shining with the glory. Moses had spent 40 days upon the mount, communing with God, receiving the law and when he come down from that mountain there was a glory, a radiancy that was coming from the face of Moses so that the children of Israel saw it and they were afraid of Moses.

One other time we see this, is in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ on the mount of transfiguration. He was there in prayer and earnest commun-

ion and fellowship with God and He began to shine with the glory. There was also another time when he was going up to Jerusalem it said that the people saw his face and were amazed. I wonder if maybe it was the same glory that had returned as he was going up to Jerusalem. It indicates there in the Greek that the people were afraid of His face.

I believe this shining is the reflection of the glory of God that is received in His presence. Why would angels shine and radiate a light in their white apparel? Because they have come from the presence of God. How many times is God spoken of as the “Lord of glory”, the “light”. I believe it is the glory of God that is the light referred to. The Bible speaks of the New Heaven and New Earth saying, **“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thererof”** (Rev. 21:23). The Lord Jesus Christ was prophesied of in the Old Testament as a light shining in the darkness. Many times the glory of God is presented as a light. The brightness of His glory is reflected to that would indicate to us the supreme holiness of God; His supreme purity. His power and majesty is a radiant light. So much so it says there will be no need of the sun or the moon for the glory of God will light that blessed city.

The Bible speaks of salvation as God in His glory shining His light in the darkness. **“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”** (II Cor. 4:6). In his sermon Stephen talks about Abraham and says, **“The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham”** (Acts 7:2). That is very interesting when we consider where Abraham was. Abraham was in idolatry; he and all his family. They were worshipping false gods. Abraham was a pagan when he was Abram in Ur of the Chaldees. God came and found him in heathen darkness, and revealed His glory in him.

We see the glory of God in sanctification. Paul, writing of this, declares to the Corinthians, **“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”** (II Cor. 3:18). We see here a progression from one state of glory to another; one state of grace to another. We see a growth and coming into closer fellowship with God, coming into a brighter glory.

What do we see common in all

these occurrences that we have? First, the angels have been in the very presence of God. They have beheld and worshiped Him and been dispatched as His messengers to the earth and they are reflecting the glory of God. The light comes from God.

Furthermore, Moses was in the presence of God upon the mountain for 40 days when he came down and his face was shining. Christ was also in the presence of God in His flesh on the mount of transfiguration when He was in earnest communion with God and fellowship with Him and He was shining with that glory. He was the **“express image”** of the person of God. (Heb. 1:3).

Stephen was full of faith, power, wisdom and the Holy Ghost and in close communion with God. Christ told his disciples there would come a time when men were going to bring them before and try them before men. They would be falsely accused. He said at that time don’t give any thought what you have to say it will be given you of the Holy Spirit what you are going to speak. This was such a time for Stephen. He was brought without notice before this council of the Sanhedrin and I believe the Holy Spirit gave him exactly what it was he was to speak. We see a man standing here in very close fellowship with God. Imagine how close that Stephen was. I believe the very words of his mouth were the very words of God

II. Secondly, Stephen was exalted in preaching the Word. Verses 2 through 53 in the seventh chapter give Stephen’s message he preached. He was unfolding before the Jews the development of the revelation of God and His purpose through the ages to the final revelation of His Son Jesus Christ. It is an amazing sermon. He begins in the very early days before Israel was ever a people and shows God’s purpose in all of those successive ages and dealing with His people throughout and revealing more of Himself and more of Himself until the full revelation came in Jesus Christ. His preaching was not with man’s wisdom. Stephen was preaching, long before Paul and Peter ever preached it, that God is not worshipped in temples made with hands. God is not restricted. The Jews saw the Temple as a building where God was confined. The only way you could worship God was to come to this building. Stephen is showing that the worship of God is not confined to buildings. He shows the progression of the revelation of God.

In preaching, he is full of power. **“And Stephen full of faith and**

power did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). Some of the commentators have described Stephen as being like a little bundle of energy. The Greek word for power there is *dunamis*, which would be kin to our English word “dynamo”. This is showing Stephen as being full of power. He had great boldness from God to preach the Word. He is standing before these Pharisees and telling them just like it is, without reservation.

He preached to men as sinners as he stood before the council of the Sanhedrin. He didn’t hold back or tickle the Pharisees fancy. **“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your father did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it”** (Acts 7:51-53). He charged them with being lawbreakers. That was an affront to the Pharisees. They took it as an insult. They were accusing Stephen of blaspheming the law, and he makes it plain that they are the lawbreakers. He was preaching to men as sinners.

He made an application of his message. He did not just present them with a doctrinal message. He showed how the fathers of the Pharisees have rejected the revelation of God all along the way. At every step how that they have rejected His prophets, and have killed His men, how they have not received the Word as it has come from God. They have been bound to their own traditions and the traditions of their fathers and making the commandments of God of none effect. They are rejecting the gospel of Jesus Christ and despising his message.

Stephen is preaching to them that a sure judgment is coming. **“To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left...See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there nay that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever: If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take**

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit questions on any Bible topic

The Berea Baptist Banner

PO Box 39

Mantachie, Mississippi 38855

Please give me your doctrinal belief on Isaiah 45:7 "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." – California



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This portion of Scripture deals with how God in His eternal plan to manifest and magnify Himself to mankind chose and raised up Cyrus for this purpose. These verses one, two, and three of this chapter tell of the unexpected things God would do to for and by Cyrus to show God's sovereign ruler ship over all things. Verses four through seven tells us that the purpose of God concerning Cyrus was to make known that God was the one that creates and controls all things for His purpose and glory and that He is the only true God and maker of all things.

It then stands to reason that God is saying in verse seven that all things were made by Him and for Him, Colossians 1:16-17. God is light therefore all light came from Him both natural and spiritual light. The natural or moral understanding of man as well as the illumination of man's spiritual understanding originates from God. Darkness must have been created by God or else it would not exist. Natural darkness which was in the beginning was created by God as well as the darkness in Egypt, Exodus 10:21-23, the deprivation of light, such as the ignorance and darkness as the result of sin or the eternal darkness which is the punishment for all unregenerate, Jude 13.

Certainly God is the creator of peace because peace only comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Only in Christ can there be peace of mind, conscience, and future eternal peace for individuals, churches, and the world (Rom. 1:7; 5:1).

I suspect the real question the author of this question is seeking is whether or not God is the author of sin. We certainly will not be guilty of attributing sin to God but we must confess that God in His eternal plan allowed sin to come into the world by creating the Devil and mankind

knowing what they would do in the future. God decreed to permit evil in decreeing by His permissive will to allow Satan and man to commit sin. God allows sin in order that His amazing grace be manifested and established by saving man from the evil of sin (Rom. 5:18-21). The appearance of evil could never have happened had not God permitted it, but God uses it for His own glory and the good of His saints (Amos 3:6; Psalm 76:10; Rom. 8:28-30).

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Verse seven of Isaiah chapter forty-five is a part of the context that reveals that Jehovah is God and there is none else. He is the only creator remaining in control of all things; therefore, all will know that He is the Most High reigning over all the earth (Ps. 83:18).

God is the potter, which formed light and darkness. He is the creator of both natural and spiritual light as well as natural and spiritual darkness. Natural light was created by God in the creation of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:3). He is also said to have made physical darkness (Psalm 104:20), and to have made separation between light and darkness (Gen. 1:4). This is also true of spiritual light and darkness. Because of his fallen nature, man is born in spiritual darkness and has no understanding of God. Jesus said of the Jews: **"He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"** (John 12:40). Lydia did not attend unto the things, which were spoken by Paul until God opened her heart (Acts 16:14). It is God that gives the light of understanding to His people (Luke 24:45).

All true peace comes from God (John 14:27). What peace we might have in this life as well as peace be-

tween God and man is made by Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

God is also said to have created evil. This is not moral evil, which is sin, for God is holy and cannot sin. This evil is a part of the curse that God placed upon man because of sin, and it is said to be from God (Amos 3:6). When Adam disobeyed God and ate of the tree, God cursed the ground and told him that in sorrow he would eat of it all the days of thy life. He was to have the evil of thorns and thistles and eat herbs and bread in the sweat of his face until he returned unto the ground (Gen. 3:17-19). Evil is God's judgment for sin. This evil consists of famine, pestilence, war, sickness, storms (Nahum 1:3; Isa. 30:30), and the many other calamities that come upon men. All things are designed ". . . according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

DAVID O'NEAL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Northside Baptist Church, 532 North Main St., Elkton, KY 42220 and Pastor Irvin Cummins will host their Annual Bible Conference beginning on July 31st at 7:30 p.m.; August 1st at 9:30 a.m. and August 2nd at 10:00 a.m.

The speakers are Don Titus, Jerry Asberry, Wayne Reynolds, Mike Channell, Lee Hammel, Mark Campbell, Randy Titus, Mark Clark Sr., Garner Smith, and Dan Gordon.

For more information call 270-265-9665 or cell phone 270-791-8474.

The Covenant Baptist Church, 38505 Dequindre Road, Troy, MI and Pastor Bill Senich will be hosting a Bible Conference beginning on September 23rd at 7:00 p.m.; September 24 at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. and September 25th at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Noon and evening meals will be served.

For more information or directions to the conference, please contact Pastor Senich at 586-977-8809 or email: wsenich811@comcast.net.

The Salem Missionary Baptist Church of Willow Hill, IL will be

hosting their 5th annual "Focus On The Singles Conference." The date of the meeting is August 7th thru 10th. If you wish to attend, you should contact Pastor Billy Holbrook at 618-592-3806 for information.

The Unity Baptist Church in Glendon, WV will host the Voice In The Wilderness Bible Conference August 15th thru 17th. The service will begin Friday evening at 6:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. A meal will be provided by the church on Saturday and Sunday. For more information contact Pastor Mark Minney at 304-462-5591.

The Rollynsburg Baptist Church in Talcott, WV will be hosting a Bible conference from July 21st thru 24th. The service will begin Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. There will be a morning and evening session Tuesday through Thursday. The morning sessions begin at 9:45 a.m. followed by lunch at noon. The evening services begin at 7:00 p.m. A 5:00p.m. Supper will precede each of the evening services. Contact Pastor Dana Stalnaker for more information at 304-466-1948.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Galena, OH will be have their Annual Bible Conference July 11th thru 12th. Services begin Friday at 6:30 p.m. and at 9:45 Saturday morning. Lunch will be provided on Saturday. For more information contact Pastor Matthew James at 614-409-2583 or email mattbrandy@runbox.com.



GLEANINGS

AN INVITATION TO WHAT?

By Dana L. Douglas

The question of giving an invitation has plagued many Gospel preachers for the last hundred years. I believe that the question can be answered only after examining what we are inviting the recipients to.

The system of concluding an evangelical sermon, by inviting people to physically move to an appointed place did not find its beginnings until the 19th century. We commonly credit Charles Finney (1792-1875) with the modern invitation system that is in place today in most "Christian" circles. Charles Finney called people forward during a service to a position, which he called the "anxious seat." He defended the

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit questions on any Bible topic

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Mantachie, Mississippi 38855

Does the Lord call men into the ministry who preach decisional regeneration? - Kentucky



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Decisional Regeneration is simply put salvation by the efforts of the flesh or mind. It teaches that mankind by simply making a decision can save himself from the penalty of his sins. In reality it teaches that the sacrifice of Christ is not sufficient to save lost sinners but salvation is dependant upon man's fleshly decision. Decisional Regeneration says that the real power or means of salvation is a matter of a decision of man instead of the sacrifice of Christ and the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-4). Those that teach salvation by man's decision teach that Christ died for every man yet in spite of Christ's death some cannot be saved because of their refusal to make a decision to accept His death for their sins. If His death is not sufficient for those who do not believe how can I be sure it is sufficient for me that decides to believe in His sacrifice? The Decisional Regenerationist says that the Holy Spirit by which one is born again (John 3:5), only comes when one decides to believe, yet John 6:63 says, **"It is the Spirit that quickeneth,**

the flesh profiteth nothing."

Such doctrine is totally contrary to all the Word of God. It casts doubt on the credibility of God's Word, Christ's sacrifice, and dishonors and blasphemes the Trinity (Heb. 10:26-29).

Decisional Regeneration is directly contrary to the teaching of Christ Himself (John 6:44-45, 65).

Without reservation I declare that God never called anyone to preach heresy. The purpose of preaching is to declare the truth to lost mankind because only the truth saves and sets sinners free (I Cor. 1:21; John 8:28-32), and to indoctrinate the saved (Matt. 28:19-20). Preaching such heresy as Decisional Regeneration rather than indoctrinate would confuse and destroy. It would make lost sinners twofold more the child of Satan (Matt. 23:15).

I believe the proof of a God called man is if they are led and taught by the Holy Spirit and if they are they will teach God's truth only (John 16:13-14; Rev. 2:1). Anybody can say they are called of God and preach whatever they want to, but God called men preach the truth as commanded by the Bible (II Tim. 4:1-3; Matt. 7:15-23).

God in His Word in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Jeremiah 23:1-4, 28-32 classifies false preachers from God called preachers and warns us to beware of them.

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I do not believe that we can make a judgment as to whether God has or has not called someone into the ministry based only on what they believe. I am sure that a great many preachers of our day are not God called. Paul speaks of Satan transforming himself into an angel (messenger) of light, and his ministers transformed as the ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:12-15). It is even possible that there are preachers who believe in salvation by sovereign grace that are not God

called.

A great number have been saved under the preaching of those who preach decisional regeneration. God will use His Word to save His elect regardless of who the minister may be or how much knowledge he might have. Many great preachers began their ministry by preaching decisional regeneration and later on were able to see the truth about grace. Let us remember that what knowledge we have we received from God (I Cor. 4:1-7).

DAVID O'NEAL

Gleanings

Continued from page 130

practice on the grounds that it served the purpose which baptism had in the days of the apostles. However, he never could cite scriptural reference, which contained a divine command to occupy an "anxious seat." At some point later the "anxious seat" became the "enquiry room," the "mourner's bench," the "altar" and now commonly it is simply the front of the church. This practice was foreign to the first Church of our Lord Jesus, as it was to our Baptist forefathers since that time until the last century. Its earliest practice is found eighteen hundred years too late to be traced to Christ.

My greatest concern with the modern invitation system is found in its implications. For confirmation of its implications, listen to the words of its best-known advocate Billy Graham. "God is speaking to you. Get up and come right now. . . a little voice says, 'You ought to come to Christ.' Come now quickly! You may never have another moment. You have to come by faith. You need Christ, you get up and come. . ."

The implication is that coming to Christ and coming to the front of a church or stadium are synonymous terms. It furthermore implies that we respond to the invitation to come to the appointed place, by faith. The hearer is coerced into coming to the front of a church and then to repeat a prayer or sign a card, and only after having done such are they told, "You are saved!" It is obvious that the carnal mind associates the act of coming forward, repeating a prayer and signing a card with the work that can only be done by the Holy Spirit of God, the work of regeneration. The invitation system implies that re-

generation is conditioned by the performance of some physical act. It also renders support to the image of God as someone waiting, pleading and even begging for the lost sinner to come. Let it be said that God has never begged helplessly at the front of a church for a lost sinner to come to Him, but in fact the Scripture teaches that we are unable to come to Him unless the Spirit of God draws us (John 6:44).

The invitation system also implies that we have the ability to choose Christ. Is it the decision of the sinner that results in regeneration or reprobation? Is the only thing necessary for this saving work willingness on the part of the sinner? According to Romans 9:16, it is not of him who wills or acts, but of God that shows mercy! What effect does the act of coming to the front of the church have upon the one who is lost? It may leave him deceived into thinking that he has now made himself acceptable unto God, but ultimately it leaves him unchanged! The modern invitation system has deceived many a lost sinner and filled "churches" with countless numbers of unregenerate members!

I oppose the inviting of lost sinners to come to the front of a church for the following reasons:

1. It lacks scriptural support.
2. It is deceptive by its implications.
3. It removes the focus from grace and places it on the act of coming.
4. It amounts to nothing more than a "salvation" by works.
5. It plays upon the emotions and psyche of dead men, who are incapable of spiritual discernment.

So, is it ever appropriate to give an invitation? It is always appropriate to invite lost sinners to come to Christ. There is but one place for a wicked sinner to turn, and it is not the front of a church, stadium or building, but to Jesus Christ. This will only happen by the enabling of the Holy Spirit of God, but we must point them there! Many preachers today think that the lost will not be saved without their counsel, encouragement or coercion. What we ought to do for the lost sinner is preach the glorious Gospel! Psychological and emotional tactics are not necessary or appropriate when the Spirit of God is at work.

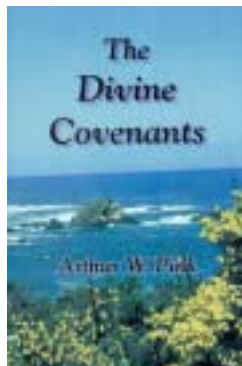
I do not believe that every invitation to come to the front of a church is totally inappropriate. Many times we invite those to come who wish to follow the Lord in scriptural baptism uniting with one of His churches, or to join a church by statement or the reception of a letter of recommendation. While a time of invitation might be granted for that, I believe it to be inappropriate to invite a lost sinner to the front of a church that he might be saved! Salvation is of the LORD! (Jonah 2:9).

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Exaltation of Stephen

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hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy” (Deut. 32:35-36,39-42). This is what the Old Testament had in store for those who broke the law and those that rejected God. This is what Stephen has shown these Pharisees to be doing and he is preaching a sure, coming judgment upon these very rejecters and murderers of Christ.

III. Thirdly, Stephen is exalted in his death. Stephen, as he stood before the council, new how they had treated the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that they had brought Him in and the false witnesses and set them up. He knew how they had charged Him with the very same things he himself was finding himself charged with. He knew how they kept on until they crucified the Lord of glory. Stephen knew as he began to preach that this was his final message. I believe that the reason we see the glory of God in his face. God was strengthening him as he moved toward his death.

God also gave him a vision. **“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”** (Acts 7:54-56). What a vision was opened to Stephen in his death! To see the heavens open and the Lord Jesus Christ receiving him, calling him, welcoming him home! Imagine this for a moment, does not the bible say that the Lord Jesus ascended to the right hand of God and is sit down. When Stephen saw the glory of God and Christ at His right hand, the scriptures say He was standing. That is significant.

I believe one reason the Lord was standing was to honor, acknowledge, and reward Stephen and welcome him and bring him home. This was the vision Stephen had. The Lord was honoring him as a great and faithful servant of His.

Stephen was exalted in death in that a compassionate heart was granted to him in his death. **“Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran**

upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:57-60). What an amazing amount of grace Stephen was given in his final hour, to be able to kneel while being stoned with stones by an angry crowd and they were gnashing on him with their teeth. They were insanelly out of control. In the midst of all that Stephen prays. The kind, compassionate, loving heart and grace Stephen had in death is that he forgave his enemies that were taking his very life.

“And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60). He was calling upon God and praying at the very last. The words **“fell asleep”** are very important as we behold this whole scene because Stephen is one that is shown standing calmly, boldly, with the look of an angel and a peace, calm and assurance in death. The Pharisees look like people that need to be institutionalized. They are probably foaming at the mouth and gnashing at their teeth. Stephen was calm and peaceful yet bold and powerful. This seems to be a very violent death. Imagine people hurling stones and beating him. In the midst of all this, he fell asleep. I do not know how much Stephen suffered in this death. I believe God gave him dying grace.

In conclusion, we want to notice a few things. Stephen must have stood on holy ground to be radiating the light of the glory of God in his own countenance; to be in that type of communion and fellowship with God and filled with the Sprit that God works through him. You can see the power, peace, grace and glory manifested in Stephen. God glorified Himself in Stephen this day. Stephen stood in a treasured place. He stood in a place very near to the feet of Christ. I don’t believe everyone has entered into that place, though some have. This is an unexplainable nearness to God in this life. There have been some; Stephen was one of them. I believe this brightness is manifested in two ways: First, the fellowship he had with God. He was near to God. Second, we see a brightness of service. Not only was he sitting at the feet of Jesus Christ but he was busy in doing his work.

This is a triumphant death. There are different ways men die but Stephen was triumphant. Peter wrote

of this in his second epistle saying, **“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”** (II Peter 1:10-11). This talks about an abundant entrance into heaven.

The old preacher John Jasper dreamed of quietly slipping into heaven. A.T. Robertson said, “But the word ‘richly’ here suggests another way of entering in. A ship may barely reach the harbor after many storms and perils, after mutiny and famine, with all the cargo gone, almost a wreck. Another ship may sweep in with full cargo, after storm and battle with all the sails flying, and be welcomed with ‘well done, thou faithful servant.’” (*Jesus As A Soul Winner*, p. 89).

This is the way some Christians enter into heaven. Some have a rich, abundant entrance. Stephen was one of those. That fact is alluded to when we see Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God to receive him because of Stephen’s faithfulness and devotion to God and service to him. Stephen had a triumphant death though it was a very bloody and violent death.

“And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel”, and in just a short while Stephen was going to be joining the angels and others of saints that had gone on before in the presence of God and the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen laid down his life having served God in life and in death.

Wheat and Tares

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(Matt. 13:24-30).

There is a close connection between this parable and the Parable of the Sower. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is described as **“another”** (*allos*), meaning another of the same kind, which is related to the kingdom of Heaven. The good seed sown in the good ground in the Parable of the Sower produces the sons of the kingdom in this parable. Like begets like; the fruit is according to the seed. The Word of the kingdom has produced sons of the kingdom.

In the parable, **“the kingdom of heaven”** is the sphere of profession that recognizes that Divine rule which originates from Heaven (Dan. 4:26). The field is the world, especially what

we call the Christian world, or Christendom. This parable is a revelation of the kingdom in the field of the world. It will consist of a mixed state of the righteous and the wicked until the completion of this age.

Christ’s interpretation of this parable is beautifully clear and simple. Some expositors are not content with the Lord’s interpretation, and so they present their own interpretation. But I shall attempt to interpret according to Christ’s interpretation (Matt. 13:37-43).

THE SOWER

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man” (Matt. 13:36-37). The expression **“Son of man”** is an expression taken from Daniel 7:13, and the Jews understood it to mean the Messiah (John 12:34). Christ is the Sower or Planter of the kingdom. All the affairs of the kingdom are in His hands. He sows sons of the kingdom in all nations of the world.

THE FIELD

“The field is the world. . .” (Matt. 13:38). Expositors are reluctant to accept the words of Christ on this part of the parable. They seem determined to make the field the church, or the church throughout the world. Catholic, Protestant, and Baptist commentators often do this. Those who have state churches make the field the visible church on earth. This is done to justify their retaining wicked persons in their churches for numbers and money. They say the words: **“Let both grow together until the harvest,”** means you should keep unconverted people in the church who were baptized in infancy. They say you cannot have a pure church, for all churches have in them some tares as well as wheat. By such a teaching they can set aside strict church discipline, and join the church and the state together. Nevertheless, the New Testament teaches that the church is to expel wicked persons from its membership (Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5:1-13).

Christ does not say, “Do not cast wicked men out of the church,” but He says in essence, “Do not cast them out of the world.”

In the early days of church history the apostate churches accepted unconverted people into the church and used Matthew 13:30 to justify such a practice. The Anabaptists and others believe in a pure church, consisting of only the regenerate. They excluded the unconverted and

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Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE GREAT HELPER

John 16:7-15

The Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save a sinner, the Holy Spirit is mighty to help a saint. The word Comforter has been variously translated. The terms "Advocate," "Paraclete," "Helper," have been used. In Romans 8:26 we read that "**The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities**"—literally "taketh hold with me." The same word is used in Luke 10:40, but nowhere else in the New Testament. "**Bid her therefore that she help me.**" The Holy Spirit has come as One who is willing and mighty to "**take hold with me,**" that I might be helped in doing the will and work of God.

I. THE CONDITION OF HIS COMING (v. 7).

1. Christ had to go, taking His humanity into the presence of God, before the Spirit could come, bringing divinity into the presence of men (Acts 2:33).
2. The bodily absence of Christ was to ensure the spiritual presence of the Helper. The special power of the Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). The Spirit came to apply the benefits of Christ's atonement.
3. The coming of the Helper was the proof that Christ's atoning work was perfected. The Spirit came to apply the benefits of Christ's atonement.

II. HIS MISSION INTO THE WORLD.

1. While the Spirit is a Helper to the believer, He is a Convictor to the world (v.8). There are three things the world needs to be convicted of—
 - (1) Of the sin of unbelief (v. 9). Unbelief of Christ to the Holy Spirit is a great sin. His mission is to glorify Christ, and His first work is to convict men that rejecting Christ is a sin—a sin against the remedy.
 - (2) Of Righteousness (v. 9).
 - A. Christ could not go to the Father until He had gone to the cross. To go to the Father He must rise from the dead.
 - B. He rose for our justification (Rom. 4:25).
 - C. The world needs the imputed righteousness of Christ (I Cor. 1:30). The Spirit convicts of the need of this righteousness (II Cor. 5:21). Our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags.
 - (3) Of judgment (v. 11).
 - A. As surely as the prince of this world (Satan) has already been judged, so will every unbeliever (John 3:18-19 RV; Heb. 2:14).
 - B. The Spirit has come to convict of judgment. Across the centuries the spirit has been prosecuting the world and bringing it into judgment because of its criminal attitude toward the Son of God. See Acts 2.
 - C. A powerless Christian or a powerless church will never be successful in convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The work must be done by the almighty Helper.

III. HIS MISSION IN THE CHURCH. To the baptized believer the Spirit has come—

1. As a guide into all truth (v. 13 RV). He guides into truth because He is the Spirit of truth. He searches into the deep things of God (I Cor. 2:10). If you thirst for truth, seek the guidance of this heavenly Helper (I John 2:27).
2. As a revealer of the things of Christ (vv. 14-15). He makes known the blessings and benefits of the death of Christ to us. He makes our lives fruitful (John 15:8).
3. As an example of self-abandoned service (v. 13 RV).
 - (1) Christ sought, through self-emptying, to glorify the Father. The Spirit seeks to glorify the Son.
 - (2) By self-denial we must honor the Son and the Spirit.
 - (3) The Son did not speak from Himself (John 14:10). Neither did the Spirit, nor should we.
 - (4) Self-will and self-assertiveness, is a usurping of the Holy Spirit.
 - (5) The Spirit should speak through us (Matt. 10:18-20). If He speaks through us, we will speak of things to come.

Wheat and Tares

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the immoral from their churches, according to the teachings of the New Testament. Cyprian tried to use this parable to appeal to the Novationists not to separate from the Catholic Church, but he did not prevail by such twisting of the Scriptures.

The field is not the church, but the world. It is in the world that this parable takes place—in that part of the field where the good seed have been sown. The wheat and the tares are not sown in the church, but in the world. Any person who does not know the difference between the church and the world is to be greatly pitied. Christ said the field was the world, and I had rather believe Christ than all earthly commentators. In this parable the world is called "**his field**" (Matt. 13:24), not His church.

THE GOOD SEED

"...**the good seed are the children of the kingdom...**" (Matt. 13:38). By "**the good seed**" I understand the plants, which sprung from the good seed. The word "**the children**" (*hoi huiōi*) is better translated "**sons of the kingdom.**" These are born of incorruptible seed. Every seed is a living one, and as a closely connected with the Sower as children are to parents. Each seed is sent forth into the soil of the world to grow and manifest His own hidden life and beauty.

In the Parable of the Sower the seed was the Word of God, but in this parable it is the sons of the kingdom—disciples or true believers who submit to the rule from Heaven. They are already translated into the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and they are heirs of the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:34).

True believers are wheat, the product of choice and precious seed. "**My goodness extendeth not to thee: But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight**" (Ps. 16:2-3). The sons of the kingdom are precious to Christ (Lam. 4:2) and honourable (Isa. 43:4). They are Christ's brethren, His friends, His sheep, His portion, and His people. They are the seed promised Him by the Father, if He would be faithful to His covenant engagements (Isa. 53:11). While they are worth much to Christ, they do not have a high opinion of themselves (Prov. 30:2-3; Job 42:6; Isa. 6:5; Eph. 3:8).

THE TARES

Jesus said: "...**but the tares are the children of the wicked one**" (Matt. 13:38). They are the offsprings of the Devil, the seed of Satan, the

sons of Hell (Matt. 23:15). I John 3:10 speaks of "**the children of the devil.**" The unsaved resemble Satan and are completely under his control (John 8:44; II Tim. 2:26; I John 5:19). They are the children of darkness. Job called them "**children of fools, yea, children of base men**" (Job 30:8). They are "**haters of the LORD**" (Ps. 81:15). They are hypocrites and heretics; they are goats among the sheep. They are good only for burning (Matt. 3:10,12; 13:40). They are "**the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction**" (Rom. 9:22).

THE ENEMY

"**But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way**" (Matt. 13:25). In the days of Christ this at times actually occurred. A man's enemy would watch until a man sowed his wheat, and then the enemy would come under the cover of darkness and sow darnel in the wheat field. No matter how great the enmity existing between people, it was considered an unpardonable offense to sow tares among wheat. Any person guilty of contaminating a neighbor's wheat field was severely punished by Roman law. When the wheat and darnel first sprang up, they looked very much alike. Even the seed is similar in shape and size to wheat, but slate gray in color. Tares are sort of degenerate wheat—spurious wheat. The planter could not separate the darnel from the wheat because the root were so intertwined that it was impossible to separate them without plucking up both. The separation of the tares from the wheat occurred at harvest time, and the women did it.

Jesus Christ identifies His enemy: "**The enemy that sowed them is the devil...**" (Matt. 13:39). Christ came to the field and plowed its hardened soil, and in the fresh plowed soil He planted the seed of everlasting truth and right. But Satan watched Him, and entered the field, and sowed seeds of error and wrong. Christ is neither the Author nor Agent of evil. We cannot blame Christianity for the tares; we can only give Christ glory for producing wheat. Sin is the trail of that old Serpent.

Satan is seen in this parable as a real person. He is not a mere metaphor, for the parable itself is the metaphor. The Devil is an active and aggressive person. He is not the principle of evil personified. In this parable Satan is the enemy of Christ, and he is at work in this world.

I want to point out a few things. First, note the time Satan worked "**while men slept**" (v. 25). The Prince of Darkness works under the

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cover of darkness. This former angel of light (II Cor. 11:14) is now a hater of the light. It is not said that the Sower went to sleep, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:4). Satan never sleeps (I Pet. 5:8). It is the servants of Christ who are said to sleep. It is only when the servants of Christ sleep that evil can succeed. In proportion to the dormancy and drowsiness of the Lord's servants, evil spreads. It is while we are asleep that Satan sows tares among the wheat. We need to wake up and be watchful of the field.

Shortly after the apostolic age, the servants of Christ ceased to watch out for Satan and his sowing tares among the wheat. The first love was forsaken as an unwatchful condition developed. Truth was mixed with alien falsehood. The fine gold was mixed with alloy, till the fine gold became dim, and the most fine gold was altogether changed.

The "mystery of iniquity" was at work in Paul's day (II Thess. 2:7, and he warned of "grievous wolves" which would enter into the churches (Acts 20:29; I John 2:19). John lived to see "many antichrists" (I John 2:18). Ungodly men came and turned the grace of God into a license to sin (Jude 4). Gnosticism, Nicolatanism, and Jezebelism attack the early churches and split them asunder. Finally, the Babylonian Whore came on the scene and later her harlot daughters. All these things resulted in a spurious Christianity—tares among the wheat.

Second, I note the method Satan employed. Christ sowed good seed; Satan sowed tares. The enemy mimicked Christ. The enemy sowed darnel, a degenerate wheat. This bastard wheat is poisonous to man, producing sleepiness, nausea, convulsions, and even death. Heresy is a destructive thing. Satan seeks to destroy Christ's kingdom by introducing spurious Christians among true Christians. Satan works from within, for he sows "tares among the wheat." The Devil has his own church (Rev. 2:9), preachers (II Cor. 11:13-15), and gospel (Gal. 1:6). Satan's greatest work will be to bring in an imitation Christ (John 5:43).

Third, during the present age Satan has some success. This is seen from the prominence given to the tares in this parable. "This comes out very clearly and most solemnly in verse 36. When Jesus sent the multitude away, and had gone into the house with His disciples, they said, 'Declare unto us

the parable of the tares of the field,' not 'the parable of the good seed and the tares' (see vv. 24,25). It is the tares and not the wheat, which predominates, and occupies the larger portion of the field. The mention of 'bundles' in verse 30 bears out the same thought" (A. W. Pink in *The Prophetic Parables of Matthew 13*, pp. 31-32).

Fourth, it is said of Satan that he "went his way" (v. 25). He quietly disappeared from the field, trying not to be seen in his evil work. Satan knew that the bastard wheat would grow on its own. Oh, how Satan has seemed to disappear from the world. Some deny that he even exists. This denial by men is the results of Satan's own planting, and those under his dominion put it forth.

THE HARVEST

"...the harvest is the end of the world" (Matt. 13:39). Christ spares the tares for a time. This is that His people may be strengthened as they contrast evil and good. It is also to give the tares a space to repent. Christ tolerates the sons of Satan for the good of the sons of the kingdom. But sparing mercy is not converting mercy.

The term "the end of the world" (*sunteleia tou aionos*) occurs five times in Matthew's gospel (13:39,40,49, 24:3; 28:20). The word for "world" is properly "age." The end of the world is the consummation of the age. It is the completion of a series of events in an age. The end of this age will be followed by the millennial age to come. The expression "the end of the world" does not mean the end of the earth or of all things as some suppose.

The servants of the householder seem to be ready to clear the field entirely of the tares as soon as they appear. They would have exterminated the wicked men of the world and left only the righteous. But Jesus forbid them to do this (Matt. 13:29-30). Christians have no right to use the sword of the state to exterminate heretics. We must not seek to forcibly root the wicked out of this world. This parable is not against church discipline, but it does prohibit persecution. To totally exterminate the wicked from off the earth "would break up the foundations of society and destroy the kingdom of Christ, because it would have no material out of which to renew its membership by conversion to itself" (J. R. Graves in *The Parables and Prophecies of Christ*, p. 27).

The connection between the master of the house and his servants (*douloi*—bondmen) does not appear in the interpretation by Christ. But I have no doubt that there may have been

such a conversation in Heaven between Christ and the angels (II Chron. 18:18-21). We must remember that angels are not omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent like God. Angels do not know about all things taking place on earth, and they cannot foresee the future, otherwise they would have known what would happen at the end of the age. The Son of God is much better than the angels (Heb. 1:4-14).

THE REAPERS

"...and the reapers are the angels" (Matt. 13:39). The impartial servants will remove the tares from the wheat, and bind the tares in bundles, and cast them into the fire. These ministering spirits shall gather the wheat into the Lord's barn. This time under consideration in this parable is the harvest of the earth by the Son of man in Revelation 14:14-20. Prior to the setting up of Christ's kingdom the son of Satan will be gathered out of the earth by the angels of God: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:41-42).

THREE THINGS ABOUT THE TARES

Three things are said about the tares or the sons of Satan. First, the tares are gathered: "Gather ye together first the tares. . ." (Matt. 13:30). "As therefore the tares are gathered. . . The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:40-41). The offensive and worthless are brought together. There is no special hope because they are so many.

Second, they are bound in bundles: "...and bind them in bundles. . ." (Matt. 13:30). This does not mean that the wicked will be conveyed to torment in one great indiscriminate bundle, but that they will be classified according to character and conduct. Maybe atheists will be in one bundle, persecutors in another bundle, and hypocrites in still another bundle. If they are gathered according to their evil propensities, then misers will be put with misers, drunkards with drunkards, adulterers with adulterers, etc. This binding means there will be no more liberty or fellowship with the sons of the kingdom.

I believe the Divine commandment to bind the tares into bundles has already gone forth (v. 30). The commercial world, the social world, and the religious world are all getting together. The Protestant daughters are

going home to mama (the Babylonian Whore). Even apostate Baptists are working to gather all the religions of the world into a big one-world church.

Third, they are cast into the fire: ". . . bind them in bundles to burn them . . ." (Matt. 13:30). "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire. . ." (Matt. 13:42). You will observe that Christ does not make the fire in this parable a figure. The furnace of fire is not some superstition of the Dark Ages, but a dreadful reality, as multitudes will discover to their eternal misery. Fire means fire. Eternal punishment is an awful reality. You don't have to believe in Hell to go there. What a fearful plunge! What an eternal separation! What an awful doom! What a dreaded imprisonment! The tares are not made for the fire, but the fire for the tares.

THREE THINGS ABOUT THE WHEAT

Three things are said about the wheat or the sons of the kingdom. First, they have security: ". . . but gather the wheat into my barn" (v. 30). This means the angels are to introduce the saints into the heavenly kingdom, and the saints and angels are together in the millennial kingdom.

Second, the sons of the kingdom will be invested with glory: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom. . ." (Matt. 13:43). They shall partake of the glory of Christ (John 17:22). They shall have glorified bodies like their Redeemer (Phil. 3:21). They will be as glorious as Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:30-31). The righteous shall "shines as the brightness of the firmament" and "as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). The sons of the kingdom will be "as the moon, clear as the sun" (S. of S. 6:10). We will shine in perfect holiness in our robes of glory and in immortal bodies. Our glory will even exceed the glory of the sun and moon (Isa. 24:23).

Third, there is distinction: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). The sons of the kingdom are now in their Father's kingdom. Their Father is on the throne. They shall adorn His majesty and obey His laws. In this day both men and angels shall see their sonship (I John 3:1-3). This is the time Paul called "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

Strictly speaking, Matthew 13:43 looks beyond the millennium to the time when Christ shall surrender the kingdom up to God the Father (I Cor.

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15:24). There will be wicked men on earth during the millennium, although the unrighteous will be gathered out as the millennium begins (Matt. 13:40-42). There will be a final rebellion of the unsaved born during the millennium at the end of this age to come (Rev. 20:7-10). The last act of Christ as the Mediator and Messiah (Son of man) is to surrender the millennial kingdom to the Father. As Christ is the servant of Jehovah, He will not fail in His subjection to the Father to the last minute and moment of time.

CONCLUSION

1. At the end of the millennium the sons of Satan are to be removed from the earth (the field). **“But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”** (Matt. 15:13). Job said of the wicked: **“His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world”** (Job 18:16-18). The psalmist declared: **“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found”** (Ps. 37:35-36). This will leave the righteous in possession of the earth. The Prophet Daniel said: **“. . . and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom”** (Dan. 7:22). When the earth is thus cleansed, it will forever be occupied by God’s people (Rev. 21-22). The earth will be redeemed from all the evil wrought by the enemy. Then the Father’s will will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matt. 6:10).

2. We see in this parable the futility of the reform movements and efforts to make the tares into wheat by human means. Many are wasting time on the cultivation of the tares. The mixed condition of the sons of the kingdom with the sons of Satan will continue until the end of this age. Christ never mentioned a time when all the tares turned into wheat in the field. This parable refutes the unscriptural dream of the post-millennialists. The Lord’s servants during this age cannot gather out all evil; they cannot banish drunkenness and immorality; they cannot purify the state and politics. The world will never be converted by the preaching of the gospel.

3. We see the great love of Christ for the wheat, or sons of the kingdom. Our Lord had rather the tares grow, than that a single blade of wheat be injured. The wicked are tolerated by God for the sake of the righteous.

4. We see in this parable the growth of both evil and good. Both the tares and the wheat, being sown, germinated and grew. The soil of the human heart quickened both. The heart can grow in error and wrong, as well as in truth and right. All the political, social, and religious institutions that curse the world, are but principles received from Satan, and grown by the human heart.

5. Humanly speaking, it is difficult in this present age to distinguish the sons of the kingdom from the sons of Satan. Some profess to be children of Heaven when in truth they are children of Hell. These speak Christian words and live in Christian communities and countries, yet they are men of an unchanged, evil heart. They are tares among the wheat; goats among the sheep. They join in marriage with the righteous and live in the same house. They work on the job with the elect. They are so mingled together that only Christ and the angels can distinguish between them.



Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read. Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS DEBATE BILL THAT COULD BAN BIBLE AS HATE SPEECH

OTTAWA, CANADA (EP)—Members of Canada’s House of Commons are closing in on a deadline to pass a bill that, if made into law, could label the Bible and the Koran as ‘hate speech.’

Bill C-250 received a second reading in Canada’s Parliament in early May and will move on to the House of Commons Justice Committee for further consideration. Svend Robinson, a member of Parliament and a homosexual, introduced the bill in 2002. It calls for the addition of “sexual orientation” to the current list of identifiable groups in the “hate propaganda” sections of Canada’s criminal code.

Critics of the bill said that such a law could make criminals out of people who quote anti-homosexuality passages from the Bible and the Koran, the scripture of Islam. While Robinson denies that such cases would ever be taken to court, such cases could result in the confiscation of Scripture materials as “hate speech.”

According to the Canada Family Action Coalition, Bill C-250 is broad enough to incriminate people who ask reasonable questions regarding homosexual behavior. “Other laws which criminalize certain forms of speech have reasonable defenses built in. For instance, the truth is always a defense to accusations of slander or libel. Is it really the intention to criminalize any discussion about ‘sexual orientation’ without providing a defense of truth?” the coalition said in a Web site document.

“Would it become a crime for the Red Cross to state the scientifically verifiable fact that homosexual men are statistically at higher risk of contracting AIDS and therefore should not be able to donate blood?”

The religious freedom of Canadian Christians, Jews and Muslims would be restricted if this bill ever became law, said Derek Rogusky, vice president of Focus on the Family – Canada. Rogusky testified against the bill in front of the House of Commons’ Justice Committee in early May. “Bill C-250 poses the very real risk of endangering the freedom of expression of many Canadians, and Christians recognize that courts have not protected their religious freedoms,” Rogusky said.

Members of Parliament have received a “landslide” of letters in opposition to this bill, Rogusky told parliamentarians during this testimony. “Canadians recognize that the bill could restrict the freedom of expression of religious views regarding homosexual behavior.” The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Catholic Civil Rights League have also voiced public opposition to the bill.

According to the Christian pro-family organization, Bill C-250 falls short on three requirements for new legislation.

“First, there is little empirical evidence about the necessity for Bill C-250. Police and government data shows little conclusive evidence that current laws are inadequate,” said Rogusky. “Secondly, the legislation contains terms that are unclear and ambiguous, like ‘hate’ and ‘sexual orientation.’ As with the term ‘marriage,’ without an explicit definition, we can’t know how courts will interpret

laws. This puts Canadians in a vulnerable position, unsure of where religious freedom and freedom of expression end and a hate crime begins.”

“Finally, Bill C-250 poses a real risk of guaranteed freedoms because the legal defenses against prosecution and conviction are limited,” concluded Rogusky. In essence, legal challenges made possible by the bill would be very costly to defend against and would likely erode freedom of religion in Canada.

The bill must survive further committee scrutiny before it can be submitted for a Parliament vote after May 27.

CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE APPROVES PRO-HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS BILL

OTTAWA, Canada (EP)—The Canadian Parliament has taken another step toward defining homosexuality as a protected class with the legal right to take alleged forms of “hate speech” to court.

On May 27, the House of Commons Justice Committee gave its approval to a bill known as C-250 that would add sexual orientation to a list of protections from “hate speech.”

Pro-homosexual groups have lauded the latest progression of the bill as a step toward “equality.” However, religious conservatives are concerned that C-250 could be used to classify the Bible, the Torah and other scriptures as “hate literature” because they contain language against homosexuality.

“We are appalled by the misguided actions of the Committee,” said Brian Rushfeldt, executive director of the Canada Family Action Coalition (CFAC). “The application of hate crime laws to opposition of certain sexual behaviors is absurd. When courts start interpreting loose language like sexual orientation, propagation of hate, promotion of hate and even the undefined term ‘hate’ itself to the issues of sexual behavior such as sodomy, we will certainly anticipate bizarre rulings from the courts. The loose language in this bill creates a danger for everyone, including educational institutions, doctors, religious groups, media and every citizen who holds to a moral standard on sexual behavior.”

Rushfeldt claims that his organization has received tens of thousands of letters calling for the defeat of C-250.

Pro-family and religious groups are speaking out strongly against C-250 and the possible threat to religious expression. At worst, said some critics of the bill, the new legislation could silence public debate on homosexuality and jail preachers who speak out against the gay lifestyle.

Roy Beyer, CFAC president, said “the practical reality of ‘human rights tribunals’ and certain court rulings to date is to interpret the expression of opinion

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that homosexuality is immoral or wrong as 'hateful'. In a world of judicial activism coming from the courts, it's just a matter of time until the upholding or expressing of an opinion or belief that homosexuality is wrong, immoral or unhealthy will be considered hateful and thus a crime."

According to REAL Women of Canada, a pro-family, "alternative" women's group based in Ottawa, the bill "will be a useful tool for organized homosexual rights activists to intimidate their adversaries" by taking them to court simply for their moral or religious beliefs.

"There is no doubt that the Charter protection of 'freedom of religion' is being shoved back and narrowed by the courts so that freedom of religion may be only safely exercised within the four walls of a church and its institutions, and only acceptable in limited circumstances in public," said a statement on REAL Women's Web site.

IS ONE MAN ABOUT TO VOTE ENGLAND OUT OF EXISTENCE?

By Paul Craig Roberts

Is Britain, our junior partner in "bringing democracy to Iraq," itself a democracy?

Apparently not. Prime Minister Tony Blair has decided that he alone is to say whether Britain loses its sovereignty and the British people lose their ancient tradition of accountable law.

In June, Mr. Blair intends to give his approval to a new European Union constitution, which would create a United States of Europe and turn Parliament into the equivalent of a local council.

Trevor Kavanagh, political editor of the Sun, Britain's largest newspaper, says Mr. Blair's decision signs away 1,000 years of British sovereignty and hands "control of our economic, defense, foreign and immigration policies to Brussels. The EU will also gain authority over our justice, transport, health and commerce systems—and dictate the strength of union power."

Mr. Blair has ruled out a referendum or vote on his decision to terminate the existence of Britain as a country. He says the issue is too complicated for voters to understand.

Think about that for a moment. Do you think it is too difficult for people to understand the difference between being an independent country and a province in a European empire? Do you think voters can't understand the difference between electing a government that is accountable to them and being ruled from afar?

Not even dictators claim the power to terminate the sovereignty of the countries they rule.

The Sun conducted a survey to

determine what the British thought about Mr. Blair terminating their country. The newspaper discovered that 81 percent of voters were unaware of the imminent loss of national existence. Eighty-four percent thought the people should have a vote on whether there is to be an England after June.

Even Valery Giscard d'Estaing, the gung-ho pro-Europe former president of France, says it is vital that people vote. Otherwise, the new European state begins as a *coup d'etat*.

As Britain would no longer exist, it could no longer sit on the U.S. Security Council or be a member of the Group of Eight leading industrialized countries. Britain's unique legal system, with its habeas corpus and double jeopardy protections, would cease to exist. Native Britons could be imprisoned for voicing opposition to their cities being overrun by Third World immigrants.

But Mr. Blair thinks these changes are too difficult for British voters to evaluate.

The Sun says it is going to campaign for a referendum and not give up the country without a fight.

The rest of the British media and Parliament apparently believe that Britain is not worth saving. Few seem concerned that a democracy will cease to exist without the consent of the people.

This fact itself seems to suggest that Britain has already made the transition to tyranny.

Physical torture chambers might not exist, but psychological torture does. Britons can be arrested for self-defense. Imagine having to decide whether to submit to rape, robbery or assault or face arrest for responding with excessive force. Force capable of driving off an attacker is likely to be "excessive," especially if accomplished with use of a weapon.

In the early days of U.S., "airport security" women had silver bullets on their charm bracelets confiscated, as if these were real weapons. In Britain, toy guns can mean arrest and loss of job. On Aug. 2, 2002, the Evening Standard reported that three 12-year-olds in Northumbria were arrested by police for playing James Bond with a plastic toy gun. The children now have police records, and their DNA and fingerprints are on file for life. Recently, a college professor was dismissed, because he permitted a student in his photography class to use a toy rifle as a prop in her photos.

Habeas corpus and protection against double jeopardy mean little when criminal sanctions apply to self-defense and to children playing with toy guns.

It might be that, practically speaking, the British have already lost the protection of their law. In choosing Mr. Blair, perhaps the British people showed an indifference to continued national sovereignty.

Such a sorry example of democracy as Tony Blair's Britain is not a role model for Iraq. In any event, democracy is unlikely to get far in Iraq. The United States will oppose democracy if it means an Islamic government under the Shi-ite majority. The Sunnis and Kurds will themselves object to rule by the Shi-ite majority. One has the feeling that multicultural Iraq is heading in three directions or back to dictatorship.

Let's see, no weapons of mass destruction, no democracy—why was it we invaded Iraq? (*National Weekly Edition*, May 26-June 1, 2003).

COURT HEARS ARGUMENTS IN 10 COMMANDMENT CASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (EP)—The fate of a 5,200-pound monument displaying the Ten Commandments in the Alabama state Supreme Court building—and some say the fate of religious freedom in America—rests in the hands of a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, who this week heard arguments in the case.

Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, who had the monument moved into the building July 31, 2001, remained convinced that the truth is on his side as he appealed U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson's November ruling that the monument violates the First Amendment's prohibition against state-sponsored religion. Though Thompson ordered the monument removed, he allowed it to remain in the rotunda pending the outcome of the appeal.

Early this week, Moore told a reporter from the *Montgomery Advertiser* that he had learned "what separation of church and state really means."

"I think that's the biggest thing that people in society have been led to believe, that separation of church and state forbids us from acknowledging God," Moore said, "when separation of church and state mandates an acknowledgment of God."

Moore said he believes the separation of church and state is a valid doctrine that keeps the government from telling people how they should worship, but that: "To forbid the acknowledgment of God is to state that your rights come from the state, from the government—which is not what the country was founded on."

He said he first had the monument installed to restore the moral foundation of the law.

According to the Montgomery newspaper, Judge Ed Carnes, a member of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, on Wednesday attacked Moore's contention that the monument doesn't establish any law but merely reflects the chief justice's decision to decorate the courthouse he presides over to acknowledge the role of the Ten Commandments played in the founding of America's legal system.

"I'm trying to understand your

argument. Its implications are staggering," Carnes told Moore's attorney, Herb Titus, according to the *Advertiser*. "If we buy this argument, the chief justice can decorate the courthouse in any religious manner he pleases and it won't violate the Constitution?"

"He could decorate the Supreme Court with a mural depicting the life, Crucifixion and resurrection of Christ? In big block letters behind his bench, for all the lawyers and everyone else to see, he could spell out 'What Would Jesus Do?' That doesn't violate the Constitution?"

Titus responded that such examples would not amount to establishing a law concerning religion.

While justices questioned his logic, Moore warned, outside the courtroom, that if he does not win the appeal, Americans could expect sweeping changes in their right to acknowledge God.

"What if the court declines the appeal in this case?" Moore asked reporters. "Every mention of God will be stricken from your public life. 'Under God' will be taken from The Pledge. 'In God We Trust' will be taken off money."

A ruling from the 11th Circuit is not expected for at least three months.

NEW STUDY LINKS TEEN SEX AND DEPRESSION, SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—A new study shows that sexual activity among high school age boys and girls often has harmful emotional and psychological consequences. Sexually active teens are less likely to be happy, more likely to be depressed and more likely to attempt suicide. The majority of sexually active teens state that they regret their initial sexual activity and wish they had waited until they were older before becoming sexually active.

"The bottom line is that teens who abstain from premarital sex are much happier," said Family Research Council's Bridget Maher, policy analyst on marriage and family issues. She said this study was consistent with other research on the effects of sexual activity on teens.

"This study is one more reason why abstinence education is a more compassionate policy approach than pushing 'safe sex,'" Maher said. "Condoms, while never 100 percent effective in protecting against the spread of diseases, can never prevent a broken heart and the serious emotional turmoil of out-of-wedlock sex." Maher is the author of *The Family Portrait*, a compilation of data, research, and public opinion on the family published by FRC and which contains an in-depth chapter on teen sex.

The study, conducted by the Heritage Foundation, is based on data from the

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National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, a nationwide survey, which examined behaviors of adolescents in junior high and high school. Among the findings were:

* Teenage girls who are sexually active are three times more likely to be depressed than girls who are not active.

"Among those girls not sexually active, 60.2 percent said they were never or rarely depressed," Maher said. "Only 36.8 percent of sexually active girls said they were never or rarely depressed."

* Girls who are sexually active are almost three times more likely to attempt suicide than girls who are not active.

* Teenage boys who are sexually active are more than twice as likely to be depressed than boys who are not active. Those boys who are sexually active are almost 10 times more likely to attempt suicide than boys who are not active.

* Almost two-thirds of sexually active teenage boys and girls state that they wish they had waited longer before beginning sexual activity. Almost three quarters of sexually active teenage girls state they wish they had waited longer before beginning sexual activity.

Maher said despite popular belief, surveys show young people want to be taught about abstinence and that they look to their parents for advice regarding their behavior. She said teens are more likely to delay sexual intercourse when they feel emotionally connected to their parents and when they know their parents disapprove of them being sexually active.

She said parents should know what their children are being taught in school regarding sex education and that if safe sex is being taught in the classroom, parents should have their children opt out of the classes. She urged parents to approach their local school board about teaching abstinence until marriage.

PASTOR DIES IN ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS THAT VIOLATE CEASE-FIRE, SAYS RIGHTS GROUP

KHARTOUM, Sudan (EP)—At least 59 people were killed, 15 injured, and 15 children and women abducted when armed Sudanese government forces from the north attacked ten villages simultaneously in southern Sudan on May 22. The attacks happened in eastern Upper Nile in violation of internationally agreed cease fire provisions.

Christian agency Servant's Heart reported that government militia attacked the village of Longchok in eastern Upper Nile using a combination of rocket-propelled grenades, heavy machine guns and assault rifles. The organization told human rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) that the troops were

under the command of Second Lieutenant Mohammed Idris of the Sudanese regular army.

Huts were set ablaze and many villagers were burned to death in their homes, including Presbyterian minister Jacob Gadet Manyiel, the region's only Christian pastor. He died along with his wife and four children as government troops surrounded their home and threatened to shoot any family member attempting to escape the flames.

The latest attacks are part of a continuing violation of current cease fire agreements by the Sudanese government, said a statement from CSW.

Sudan has been ripped apart by civil war for over 20 years. Military forces from the Islamic north have been accused of committing terrible crimes against civilians of the Christian and animist south. The regime has been accused of harboring terrorists, causing famine and perpetuating slavery by the U.S. government and human rights groups around the world.

Attacks against southern targets have continued unabated in both eastern and western Upper Nile despite the signing of a second and supposedly more comprehensive cease fire agreement in February 2001. According to CSW, the National Islamic (NIF) government has actively hindered international attempts to monitor events in the area.

The attacks on May 22 violated a U.S.-brokered agreement for the protection of civilians and non-combatants. However, even as the attacks were occurring, the Sudanese Foreign Minister was meeting in Washington with Secretary of State Colin Powell, stating that a peace agreement was in sight.

"Last month during its six-monthly review of the Sudanese peace process, the U.S. government disappointed many in the southern Sudanese community by failing to censure Sudan for its continued violations of the peace process," a statement from CSW said. "This failure occurred in the wake of a decision by the UN Human Rights Commission to upgrade Sudan's human rights status and end the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan."

CSW called on the international community to take robust and decisive action to ensure the return of the women and children abducted during these attacks and to immediately punish violators of the letter and spirit of internationally concluded agreements.

CSW U.K. President Baroness Caroline Cox said the current situation was even worse than what she had witnessed during her most recent visit to Sudan. "The continuing attacks by the Sudanese government on unarmed civilians in eastern Upper Nile are particularly disturbing in view of the current peace talks and raise serious questions about the NIF regime's

sincerity of commitment to genuine peace," said Cox.

Dennis Bennet, executive director of Servant's Heart, stated that given the American government's reluctance to immediately and thoroughly investigate previous well-documented atrocities in eastern Upper Nile, it was "completely understandable that the Government of Sudan-led military forces feel they can also kill and enslave civilians in other portions of eastern Upper Nile with impunity. . . The U.S. State Department is as much at fault for these atrocities as is the government of Sudan," Bennet added.

GLEANINGS HERE AND THERE

LEXINGTON, Ky. (EP)—Lexington's gay and lesbian community is applauding the mayor's decision to offer health insurance coverage to homosexual partners of city employees starting July 1. But, according to an article in the Lexington Herald-Leader, Mayor Teresa Isaac has drawn fire from Urban County council members who say they were not notified of her plans and do not support the move. To receive the benefits, employees and their partners must sign a declaration that says they have lived together and been in the relationship for six months; they are at least 18 years old; they plan to live together indefinitely; and they "are engaged in a committed relationship of mutual caring and support." They must also show examples of interdependence, such as joint bank accounts or common ownership of a motor vehicle or property.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—The tax cut bill that President Bush pushed through Congress last week came in at roughly \$350 billion, about half what he originally proposed. However, it wasn't Democrats, but recalcitrant Republicans who shaved the size of the final package, according to political observers. With the single exception of retiring Sen. Zell Miller of Georgia, all Democrats opposed any tax cut plan. This political reality put Republicans Olympia Snow of Maine and John McCain of Arizona in the driver's seat. They negotiated downward the size of the tax cut. But in the end, Sens. Snow and McCain still voted with the Democrats. The final bill offers some relief for working families on the marriage penalty, rate reductions and an increase of the per-child tax credit.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—Two efforts to turn U. S. military hospitals into abortion clinics were defeated last week, according to the Family Research Council (FRC), which has been following the legislation. In the Senate, an amendment to the Defense spending bill sponsored by Patty Murray of Washington was rejected 51 to 48. In the House, a similar amendment offered by Rep. Loretta

Sanchez of California was soundly defeated 227-201. That is 12 votes more than the pro-life forces got last year in defeating the Sanchez amendment. According to the FRC's Ken Connor, "Doubtless the pro-abortion forces will be back next year with similar amendments. But the trend clearly favors the sanctity of life."

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (EP)—After the call to prayer, the call to vote is going out to Muslims around the nation. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights group, is registering voters to give a stronger, more united political voice to Muslims living in the United States. It is part of a nationwide effort to sign up 1 million new voters for next year's election. Estimates of the number of Muslims in the United States vary dramatically, from 2 million to 6 million.

KHARTOUM, Sudan (EP)—An organization researching the slavery situation in Sudan recently claimed to have collected over 10,000 names of missing slaves. According to the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), tens of thousands of Sudanese civilians who were forced into slavery are missing. Civic leaders in northern Bahr El Ghazal, the area of southern Sudan most severely affected by slave raids, told the American Anti-

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AVAILABLE AGAIN!

Scriptural Church Organization

by Milburn Cockrell



The False Church



The True Church

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Slavery Group (AASG) that over 200,000 women and children have been enslaved by the military of Islamic northern Sudan and its allied militias since the beginning of the Sudanese civil war in 1983. The fates of the 10,000 missing slaves, most of them from the Christian and animist south, are unknown, and the AASG is hoping that the announcement will spur the U.S. government and non-governmental bodies into action in stopping the human rights tragedy in Sudan. Dr. Charles Jacobs, AASG's president, said Sudanese slavery is a "crime against humanity" and that the "results of this initial RVI investigation reveal just the tip of the iceberg" of the slavery problem. The Bush Administration is currently involved in negotiating peace between the government stationed in Khartoum and rebels from the south.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (EP)—A report by the National Study of Youth and Religion, a four-year research project based at the University of North Carolina, shows that teens who are members of religiously active families are more likely to have strong family ties. "All three dimensions of family and parental religions involvement analyzed here (family religious activity, parental religious service attendance and parental prayer) tend to be associated significantly with positive family relationship characteristics," reads the summary of the report. The study found that youth ages 12 to 14 in families heavily involved in religious activities are more likely to participate in family activities and are less likely to run away from home. Christian Smith, the principal investigator in the study, said, "The teenagers tend to admire and enjoy their parents more, get praise from their parents, their parents know more about the teenager's friends and social contacts." Jim Weidmann, of Focus on the Family, said, "This is confirmation that God is blessing parents for their obedience in teaching God's commandments."

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—According to a recent study by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (NCPTP), 20 percent of 12 to 14 year olds have had sexual intercourse. Bill Albert, of the NCPTP said that parental neglect is the main reason for the alarming statistic. "I think it is really a wake-up call to parents, for those who thought they could kind of talk about sex, love and relationships once their kids get into high school," he said. "What we want to tell young people is that abstinence is your first choice, it is your best choice." Leslee Unruh, of the Abstinence

Clearinghouse, said that the abstinence-only form of sex education is really the only effective choice. "We have a real problem," she said. "We have been selling raging hormones to everyone. These are not animals. These are young people that have willpower." Since the government began endorsing abstinence education, teen sex has seen a sharp decline. Unruh said that sexually active teens have a 70 percent success rate at ending their destructive behavior when they hear the abstinence-only message.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP)—For the second year in a row, a homeschooler has won the national geography bee. The competition went to a second tiebreaker before James Williams, a 14 year old from Vancouver, Washington, claimed victory May 21 in the 15th annual National Geographic Bee. The deciding question: "Goa, a state in southwestern India, was a possession of which country until 1961?" Portugal was James' correct answer, netting a \$25,000 college scholarship, a lifetime subscription to National Geographic magazine and a week at SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Adventure Camp. Ann Williams, the

winner's mother, told the Associated Press that she and husband Craig had decided on home schooling before they had any children. "We wanted to make learning a lifestyle rather than something you have to do," she said. It allows the children to concentrate on areas they enjoy and the family isn't tied to a school schedule, she added. The 55 state competitors who participated in the finals were the survivors of more than five million who entered local contests.

DUBLIN, Ireland (EP)—Boy scouts from Protestant and Catholic homes in Ireland will no longer attend separate scout troops. On May 11, scouting leaders decided to bring an end to five-year merger negotiations by officially voting to combine the Catholic Boy Scouts and the Protestant Scouting Association into one body called Scouting Ireland. Over 30,000 children will be affected by the decision. Ireland's Catholic bishops allegedly opposed the merger over the issues of property use and of an alternate scout oath instituted by the Protestant Scouting Association which replaced the word "God" with a reference to "spiritual reality."

Studies in Esther

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

"Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)" (Esther 1:1).

The book of Esther is named for its primary character. Esther was an orphan, Jewish girl raised by her uncle Mordecai who rose to fame and prominence through some rather unusual means. She is really the main focus of the book. The Hebrew name of Esther is Hadassah which means myrtle. The name "Esther" is a derivation of the Persian word for star. It is commonly referred to as the volume of Esther by the Jews.

The time of the events of this book is sometime after the Jews were released from Babylonian captivity. This was during the time that it was permitted for them to return to their homeland although a good number of them determined not to return to Jerusalem but to stay in the Persian kingdom in and around Babylon. It was after that the temple was rebuilt. The temple was rebuilt in the years between 536-516 BC. It was sometime after that in 444 BC that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. So, the book of Esther, as far as its timing comes in between the rebuilding of the temple and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. During that time,

the Persian empire permitted the Jews to leave if they wanted and to go back and rebuild their city and homeland.

The events of this book, which cover about twelve years or so, come in between those two major events in the history of Israel. If Ahasuerus is indeed the King Xerxes, then the book of Esther comes in between the sixth and seventh chapters of the book of Ezra. This would give reason for the ardent faith of Ezra recorded in Ezra 8:22, **"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him."** The Jewish people had been delivered by a great deliverance in the book of Esther, without the help of extraordinary agency. And Ezra, on thinking about or wishing to go up to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in his time, makes this statement and we see the faith of Ezra. We can see it substantiated by the events in the book of Esther. The people had come to the very brink of ruin. They were almost exterminated as a people from the face of the earth in this book. However, God saves them and delivers them. Ezra would certainly be

emboldened by this great deliverance and he says **"I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers."** He said, "I could not go to the king and to the rulers of the world and seek help for the Lord's work." **"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him: but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him."** So, if Ezra had been preaching that God had his hand upon his people and was going to protect and deliver them and that God was going to turn away their enemies, then it would seem that Ezra would have a lack of faith if he would be seeking worldly help as far as the work of the Lord was concerned. This is about the time of the events of this book.

The authorship of this book is uncertain. Some would attribute it to Mordecai. There is a good case for that though that does seem unlikely. Some have attributed it to Ezra, some to Nehemiah. Some have attributed it to Jehoakim the son of Jeshua. We do not really know the definite authorship of this book. I do not doubt that it was spoken by the Holy Spirit, but who the human penman was to write this book, I cannot be exactly sure.

We want to consider also the authenticity of this book. It is one that has met with some opposition and criticism. We read all the time of people who say of the Bible "this part is not valid; this part is not authentic; this part was corrupted". However, I believe the word of God is complete and whole. Esther was canonized in the scriptures by the Jews and highly esteemed by them as well. The Lord, during his ministry on the earth, did not make any reference to the fact of them being in error in keeping this as a portion of the scripture. We see that also **"that unto them (the Jews) were committed the oracles of God"** (Rom. 3:2). So it was committed to their keeping and the Jews highly esteem it.

It is rejected by many because God's name is not found in the text. There is also not a direct reference to God in all of this book. I know that the name has been pointed out by some to be hidden in four different places. The name "Jehovah" occurs there hidden in the acrostics in the original language. I believe in one other case the other name "I Am that I Am" appears. However, the name "God," or any of His names in the scriptures, is not referred to in the text of this book. Many have found reason to reject it for that cause.

I want to point out that the fact that God's name does not occur in the text does not mean that God and His power and His hand is not clearly seen

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throughout the whole of this book. I believe that it is. Asaph writes **“Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare”** (Ps. 75:1). The Psalmist seems to be indicating here that the works of God declare His name and declare His name to be near. Even in the observation that the human eye makes of this universe and the world that we live in, the works of God are clearly seen. The works of God are very evident in the book of Esther and God can be seen working through people, whether they be Jew or Gentile. His **“wondrous works declare”** His name to be near.

Though His name may not be spoken exactly in this book there is no doubt that His name is near because His wondrous works are found here. David declares, **“The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands”** (Ps. 9:16). One of the points about the book of Esther is that God does execute judgment upon Israel, and therefore His enemies, even though they would seek out many different avenues in order to persecute. They really wanted to exterminate the Jews from the face of the earth, but we see that God effected a great deliverance and He did execute judgment upon the enemies of His people. We see again that God can be clearly seen by the narrative and the events that have taken place in this book.

We can also see that God, and Christ in particular, is ever the Deliverer of His people in all ages. In Acts 7, the sermon that Stephen preached before the Sanhedrin council, we see how that Stephen began before Israel was a nation and showed the development, or the greater revelation that God gave of Himself to them, all the way up until the time of the revealing of His Son in the flesh. We also see that he is showing how that Christ was ever the Deliverer of His people and especially in type through Moses and David and so on, in all ages.

We see in the book a deliverance brought to the people of Israel. Can we expect that it comes from any other source than from the Christ of Israel, the Messiah, the Hope, the Blessed One? I do not have any reason to expect that their deliverance came from any other means, than directly from God. Again, we see that this is brought out in the book of Esther and makes it very plain that God is all throughout this work.

The purpose of the book as a whole

would be the teaching of the divine providence of God. The divine providence of God is set out in a way that is so amazing in this book, because God is able to work in and through all the normal affairs of the earth and to turn them all to accomplish His purposes, and without the disturbance of a single natural thing. There was no great miracle that was worked here. Moses did not come and cast down his rod and it became a serpent and Moses did not come with all the plagues that came down on Egypt. Nor was there any miraculous birth or resurrection from the dead. There are no miracles recorded in this book. The main character, Esther, seems to be not necessarily of extraordinary great faith. However, God does still affect a deliverance for His people.

The divine providence of God is something that is very difficult for us to get a handle on. The way that I look at the providence of God is this: you have the will of God and you have His decrees; you also have the eternal purpose of God, which I believe is eternal and immutable and a complete expression of God and His mind. I see the providence of God as the execution of God's purpose, whether He is working directly or indirectly. Whether He is working through agency or without agency. The direct hand of God came down in the time of Moses and the Scriptures speak of the **“tables of stone, written with the finger of God”** (Ex. 31:18). So, whether it be through agency or through the direct act of God. Whether through permission or whether through a causative effect, the providence of God is the execution of God's will.

I want to note two quotes from Alexander Carson regarding the purpose of the book of Esther in teaching the providence of God. Alexander Carson was one that seemed to have a very good handle on the providence of God. I know my understanding of God's providence has been helped by the understanding that Alexander Carson had of God's providence. He said, **“The great design of this portion of the Holy Scriptures is to display the wisdom, providence, and power of God, in the preservation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies.”** (*Confidence in God*, p. 3). He said further about the book of Esther, **“In it we see the people of God providentially brought to the very brink of ruin, and delivered without a single miracle. The means employed to effect their destruction are by Providence employed as the means of their exaltation and glory”** (*The History of Providence*, pp. 176-177). We see here that the very means the enemies of Israel

used to try to effect their destruction, God used to effect their deliverance. We are given a view of the providence of God.

The Jews nationally, as they would look at the book of Esther, have reason here to take confidence in God concerning the promises of the restoration, the promises that pertain to the nation of Israel. Hosea prophesied, **“Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God”** (Hos. 1:9). This is a prophecy, and there are others, that God was going to set aside the nation of Israel. God was going to permit their dispersion, their scattering, throughout the nations of the earth for a time. Paul believed this and wrote in his epistle to the Romans, **“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”** (Rom. 11:25-27). Paul said in the first verse of this chapter, **“I say then, Hath God cast away his people?”** He answers in verse 2, **“God hath not cast away his people.”** So, the promise to the nation of Israel is that they shall be regathered and restored. We believe in the literal restoration of Israel. They shall be brought again, although in the book of Hosea, he said they shall be called **“Loammi”** which means “not my people” because I am not their God. The current situation with the nation of Israel is that they have been scattered among the nations of the earth and they have somewhat returned unto their homeland but there is a time of a future restoration when God is going to gather Israel out of the four corners of the earth. The book of Esther provides reason for confidence and reason for hope in this promise because if God would still, even though He would be in the shadows and it looks like a hands-off approach, God would still know His people even though they were in Persia and not in their homeland and not observing the true religion and not worshipping God. God still had His eye on His people here in the book of Esther and God did not forsake them nor allow them to be destroyed from the face of the earth. If God has done this, then we see that God will still watch over and care for His people though they be scattered. His eye is still upon them.

I want to think about something

that this book is to all of God's people. This book could strengthen our faith and trust in Him that is mighty to restrain the wrath of men. Asaph writes from experience, **“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”** (Ps. 76:10). It is hard for us to understand that God can direct and be praised by the wicked acts of men. We certainly see the wickedness of men in the book of Esther. We certainly see that manifested in Haman and all of his devious plots. So God overrules the wickedness of the earth to restrain the wrath of man. The wrath of man that God does permit, praises God and works to His glory. God uses it to bring about His purposes. We look at times when we have a global conflict or times of uncertainty and we do not understand how someone could be so evil and depraved to do the things that terrorists have done recently and have been doing for many years. But the Bible says, **“the wrath of man shall praise thee.”** God will indeed restrain the remainder of that wrath. This should strengthen our faith to really believe and trust in God who is able to overrule all the wickedness of men in order for His glory and our ultimate good.

We see also that God uses the general, natural course of things to effect his purposes. God does not always work through some great sign or wonder or some great mysterious happening. We see that most often God works through the natural course of things that He established when He created this earth. He **“sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”** (Matt. 5:45). We might think very little of the rain or the sun. But the book of Esther is one that shows God working in the most trivial of matters on this earth to bring about His purposes. We can look at the sun and the rain as coming from God and being used by God to accomplish His purpose on this earth.

God has His way in the **“whirlwind and in the storm”** (Nahum 1:3). He rebukes the sea and makes it dry. The mountains quake at Him. Even in the normal course and patterns of weather that we experience on this earth, God is still in control of all these things and is working through all these things in order to effect His purpose.

“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)” (Esther 1:1). This Ahasuerus that is mentioned, the king of Persia, is most generally believed to be Xerxes, and

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there are some arguments to be made for a couple of other kings, but this is the most likely. He reigned over Persia from 485 to 465 BC until the time of his death.

He **"reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces."** We get a glimpse of the vast scope of the Persian empire at this time. In the reign of Darius over Persia, there were 120 provinces. So, if this is Xerxes, I believe he would have succeeded after Cyrus (Dan. 6). Here we read that the Persian empire has increased from that time to 127 provinces. Josephus reported the expansion of the Persian empire during the reign of Darius and Cyrus and Xerxes. He also reported that at its very peak, the expansion of the Persian empire was up to 360 provinces.

We are given a glimpse, in this first verse, of the grandeur and the power of this earthly kingdom. This was the world power at this time. It was the kingdom that preceded the golden kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's vision. It would be the silver kingdom referred to as the Persian kingdom.

This verse gives us an idea about why there were so many Jews in Babylon, even though they had been released from their captivity and could have returned to their homeland. Many had chosen to enjoy the prosperity and the success that they had and the lifestyle they enjoyed in the kingdom of Persia around Babylon rather than to return to their homeland. Their homeland of Palestine and Jerusalem lay in mostly ruins at this time. Even though the temple had been rebuilt, the wall still was not rebuilt and so to leave Babylon, where they had homes and businesses and friends and family, to return would have been a pretty hard journey. We see this Persian empire growing, succeeding, and flourishing and on its way to the pinnacle of power, so it was very prosperous and a good place to live as far as your pocketbook was concerned. The Jews had chosen to stay rather than to go to Palestine, though they were enabled to go.



GLEANINGS

GREAT CHRISTIANS By J. W. Alexander

How little adventurous independent piety! Bold thinking, but tame mimic

religion. We feel and do as others feel and do; reproduce their diaries, rehearse their prayers, and catch the fashion of their awakenings. To be a great Christian, would be to become very unlike the men around us; hence great Christians have been in solitudes, in missions, or among persecutions. Sometimes I think we are more tied down to a conventional piety than the very Romanists. Their great saints went astray, and are not to be imitated; but they did not adhere to the old, hereditary ways; they broke out in a new direction. Are not yearnings after better things among God's ways of producing them? Are not strange trials, pains, mortifications, and humbling, among God's ways of training the soul? Should not such junctures be faithfully seized upon, for making higher reaches of experience? Have not special seasons of devotion, with long continued prayers and praises, been remarkably owned of God? Can eminent piety be reached without them?

We are presumptuous in figuring to ourselves the type of piety, which we ought to attain. Perhaps God is forming us to a different type. Perhaps God intends a type unknown in any other; for the inward countenance of man is as peculiar to the individual as the outward. It is only by waiting in comparative quietude, that we can discern which way this divine tendency guides, and there is danger of running whither we are not sent, and even of grieving the holy Spirit of grace.

It seems to me that in our day we take the pattern and measure of our religion too commonly from what is popular, that is from what is bustling, outward, and full of éclat. But it may appear in another world, that some of the mightiest influences have proceeded from souls of great quiet. No book it is supposed of human composition, has had greater influence than the Imitation of Christ, by Thomas A. Kempis. Some of the greatest characters have been formed in secret, as some of the wonders of nature are wrought under the earth. No man knows what God has made him for. Some men, for all we know, may be sent into the world chiefly to form other men. The grand act of a servant of Christ, for which God has been

preparing him for many years, may be to give an impulse to some other man, and this may be accomplished in a moment, and when neither of the two suspects it. No man knows when the great act of his life takes place. No man knows when he is doing the greatest good. The old monk who directed young Martin Luther, possibly did nothing so important in his life. Sometimes it is a child, and whom would a Christian more joyfully influence than the son of his bosom? It is for him we labor, pray, suffer, and live. How do we know but the chief purpose for which God has spared our lives is, that we may form an instrument for his work in our own family? Thus the flowering plant dies when it has matured a fruitful of seed. How insignificant was Jesus, or Obed, or Boaz, compared with David; or Zacharias and Zebedee, compared with the two Johns and James. A due sense of what God demands of our sons, and an insight into his method of planning and bestowing for a series of generations, would make us importunate for gifts of the Spirit in our character as educators, and gifts on those who sit as loving learners at our knees.

Philip the Evangelist probably preached no sermon like that in the chariot. We may, therefore, err by forcing matters. The guard must be set here against inaction, under pretence of spiritual waiting. But after a certain point of experience is attained, we readily distinguish humble waiting for God's influences, from indolent, carnal sloth.

The more we believe in a direct influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, the more ready shall we be to expect this influence in ways which are uncommon. We have no pledge that we shall be operated on, after the rubrics of other men; nor that the ways in which we may be led shall always be pleasing to other men, even of the household of faith. Our tendencies are not to be necessarily of the Spirit because they seem so: they are to be tried by the word; and they are most apt to be so, in and over the world. Earnest prayer for so vast a blessing is all-important. There is no promise more explicit or more precious, than that of the Spirit. It is sealed by the

reference to our beloved children, and the gifts which we, though evil, give to them. It is all things in one. Therefore it is not wonderful that so much is made in the New Testament of the Spirit; the contrast being painful between this and the popular theology.

After all, if God did not work in us, beyond our knowledge and our seeking, we should come to nothing. O, give us thy Holy Spirit.

(Thoughts on Preaching, pp. 75-77).

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 5-1-2003 to 5-31-2003

Beginning Balance	\$1,481.36
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Berea B. C., West Point, TN	50.00
Floyd Williamson, Philpot, KY	180.00
John Otis, Agra, KS	100.00
.....	630.00
TOTAL	2,741.36
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	890.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	890.00
.....	\$1,221.36
Bank charge	-10.00
BALANCE	\$1,211.36

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance	\$1,413.32
RECEIPT	
Total	1,253.32
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	200.00
Total Expenditures	200.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,053.32

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 5-1-2003 to 5-31-2003

Beginning Balance	\$6,209.86
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	28.65
Berea B. B., Mantachie, MS	1,340.00
Berea M. B.C., Mansfield, OH	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN	150.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	90.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	125.00
Cedar Grove B. C., Millport, AL	50.00
Central Avenue B. C., Tampa, FL	25.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	20.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Faith B. C., Clarksville, TN	100.00
Faith B. C., Seffner, FL	100.00
Faith M. B. C., Lynn, AR	25.00
George Robinette, Englewood, CO	100.00
Gerald Price, Johnson City, TN	15.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
Grace B. M. Marion, IL	25.00
Helen Milem, South Point, OH	100.00
Helen Strum, Ashland, KY	200.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winton-Salem, NC	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL	25.00
Landmark B. C., Ft. Worth, TX	50.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	25.00
Larry J. Ricklefs, Skagway, AK	17.50
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM	100.00
Letson Farrell, Long Beach, MS	100.00
Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	200.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM	300.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Aztec, NM	25.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	75.00
South Park M. B. C., Seattle, WA	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH	150.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Raleigh, NC	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	200.00
Subscriptions	165.00
Dividing checks	325.00
Sub Total	\$5,516.15
TOTAL	\$11,726.01
EXPENDITURES:	
Wages	3,440.00
Printing	494.89
Postage	1,263.43
FICA taxes	263.17
Supplies	71.16
Dividing checks	343.47
Total Expenditures	5,876.12
.....	5,849.89
Bank charge	-16.30
.....	5,833.59
Bank made mistake on ck#2272	+0.05
ENDING BALANCE	\$5,833.64

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